LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JAN 27 1933
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BS1505
.8.W456

Division

Section

PIONEER PROPHETS

The Church Teachers' Library

A BONDMAN OF THE LORD. The Life and Letters of St. Paul. By H. S. C. E. Limp cloth, 2s. 6d. net. Also obtainable in cloth boards, 4s. 6d. net.

THE HARMONY OF THE COLLECTS, EPISTLES, AND GOSPELS. A Devotional Exposition of the Continuous Teaching of the Church throughout the Year. By the Rev. MELVILLE SCOTT, D.D. 2s. 6d. net.

PIONEER PROPHETS. By URSULA WELLS. Limp cloth, 2s. 6d.; cloth boards, 3s. 6d. net.

Others in contemplation.

LONDON: S.P.C.K. AND C.E.S.S.I.

PIONEER PROPHETS

MOSES TO HOSEA

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JAN 27 1933
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY

URSULA WELLS, S.Th., L.T.

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

First published 1929

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO

THE OLD GIRLS

OF THE

ABBEY SCHOOL, READING

THE author acknowledges her indebtedness to the following:

"The Religion of the Semites." W. Robertson Smith, notes by S. A. Cook.

"The People and the Book." Edited by A. S. Peake.

"The Historical Geography of the Holy Land." G. A. Smith.

"The Book of the Twelve Prophets" (Expositor's Bible). G. A. Smith.

"The Decline and Fall of the Hebrew Kingdoms" (Clarendon Bible). T. H. Robinson.

"The Old Testament Chronologically Arranged" by E. W. Hippisley.

"The Code of Deuteronomy." Adam C. Welch.

"Prophecy and Religion." J. Skinner.

"The Modern Use of the Bible." H. E. Fosdick.

"Prophecy and Eschatology." N. Micklem.

"A Century of Excavation in Palestine." R. A. S. Macalister.

"The New Psychology and the Hebrew Prophets." J. W. Povah.

"A Study of the Old Testament." J. W. Povah.

"Belief in God." C. Gore.

"The Prophetic Consciousness." M. D. R. Willink.

"A History of the Hebrew People." C. F. Kent.

Article "Prophecy and Prophets," Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.*

A Guide to the Assyrian Collections. British Museum.

And many others.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	ix
CHAPTER		
I.	MOSES	15
	PART I.—HIS CALL	15
	PART II.—THE COVENANT OF SINAI	22
	PART III.—THE IDEAL PROPHET	24
II.	DEBORAH	28
III.	GIDEON	35
IV.	JEPHTHAH	41
V.	SAMUEL	45
VI.	NATHAN	52
VII.	THE REIGN OF SOLOMON	55
VIII.	ISRAEL AMONG THE NATIONS	63
IX.	ELIJAH	75
	PART I.—MOUNT CARMEL	75
	PART II.—MOUNT HOREB	82
	PART III.—THE MOUNT OF ASCENSION	86
X.	MICAIAH AND THE "400"	91
XI.	ELISHA	95
	PART I.—THE TASKS FULFILLED	95
	PART II.—ELISHA AND THE SYRIAN WARS	100
	PART III.—ELISHA, THE FRIEND OF ALL	106

CHAPTER PAGE
XII. The Call of Amos - - - 111
XIII. The Message delivered by Amos - 120
XIV. The Day of the Lord - - - 127
XV. The Preparation of Hosea - - 134
XVI. The Eternal Message of Hosea - 140

Index - - - - - 145

MAPS

Physical Features of Canaan - - - 31
Israel among the Nations - - - 65
Palestine between the Empires - - 113

ILLUSTRATION

Jehu paying Tribute - - - - 101

INTRODUCTION

SOURCES

THE records of the life and works of Israel's "Pioneer Prophets" are preserved in the Pentateuch and "Former Prophets."

THE PENTATEUCH.

The authorship of Moses is not claimed for the whole Pentateuch in the books themselves; on the contrary, it is expressly stated that Moses wrote particular laws contained in it. These earlier laws, called the "Book of the Covenant" (Exod. xxiv. 7), are generally identified by scholars with the Code contained in Exod. xx.-xxiii. It was only in later ages that the Jews attributed all subsequent law to Moses, Israel's first Lawgiver.

Throughout the Pentateuch and Joshua there are indications that these books, as we now have them, were the work of various authors dating from different periods. Some examples will make this clear.

TWO VERSIONS OF ONE STORY.

There are many instances of events described twice over from different points of view. In some cases the double narrative of the same event is interwoven to form one story, and can be separated into its component parts as follows:

THE EARLIER OR PROPHETIC NARRATIVE OF CROSSING THE RED SEA.

"And the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land . . . and it came to pass in the morning watch, that the LORD looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians

through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians, and He took off their chariot wheels that they drave them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians . . . and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it, and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea" (Exod. xiv. 21*b*, 24, 25, 27*b**).

THE LATER OR PRIESTLY NARRATIVE.

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea . . . and the waters returned. . . ." (Exod. xiv. 21*a*, 21*c*, 22, 23, 26, 27*a*, 28*a*†).

When these accounts are separately read, it will be noted that each is complete without the other. While the main fact of God's deliverance of His people is the same in each, the way in which the Exodus was brought about is differently described and interpreted.

The earlier account reveals a more primitive idea of God; in this we read that the LORD Himself sent a wind, watched from the pillar of cloud, and "took off" the Egyptian chariot wheels by causing them to stick in the mud. Thus the writers believed that Yahweh (the LORD) planned and ordered an unusually strong wind and prepared swampy ground with the intent of saving the Israelites and drowning the Egyptians.

In the later account the idea of God was not so simple

* The letters *a, b, c* indicate the different parts of a verse.
† Article "Exodus," Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.*

and childlike. He was not conceived to be in direct contact with His world, ordering the winds and tides to accomplish His will, but He issued His commands through Moses. The deliverance was believed by these writers to have been caused miraculously by Moses stretching forth his hand over the waters.

Accounts written from these two points of view can be traced throughout the Pentateuch and Joshua. It is now generally accepted that the earlier account was written in the "Schools of the Prophets" 850-750 B.C. in Judah and in Ephraim. Even this, therefore, combined two distinct stories representing the traditional history as preserved and interpreted by these "schools of prophets" in the northern and southern kingdoms; the two can even now be traced and separated, but they are very similar, having been written by different groups from the same point of view.

The later account was the work of priests, during the Exile, fifth century B.C. It was written in more stately language from a different point of view.

Growth in Moral Standards.

The revelation and proclamation of a higher moral standard by the prophets necessitated the growth of a more advanced ethical code. Interesting examples show that Israel's law represented stages in the nation's moral growth. For example, the earliest Code, fitted for primitive life, allowed the law of personal revenge: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Exod. xxi. 24, 25), but the later Levitical law commanded: "Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18).

We have the authority of Christ in distinguishing the higher from the lower standard of morality in the Law. Unlike the Jews, who accepted every jot and tittle as equally sacred and binding upon all, Jesus relegated the primitive law of revenge to the past, with these words: "Ye have heard that it was said

. . . but I say unto you" (Matt. v.). He sanctioned the law of love to God and man, taken from Deut. vi. and Lev. xix., while He further widened its scope to embrace men of other races, in the Parable of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke x.).

The date of the Deuteronomic Law cannot be proved; many scholars have identified it with the Law Book discovered in the Temple 621 B.C. upon which Josiah based his reformation (2 Kings xxiii.).

Casual Allusions.

A lapse of time, between the writer's own day and the event he was recording, is often suggested by casual allusions—*e.g.*, after the Jordan has been crossed it is written: "Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there *unto this day*." Evidently the writer thought it worthy of remark that these stones should be standing in the same place so long after (Josh. iv.).

Another type of allusion is that which presupposes a knowledge of later history—*e.g.*, the warning contained in Deuteronomy against setting up a king who would live in luxury, keep a harem of wives, and trade with Egypt in horses, was obviously written after the experience of Solomon's reign, when the evil results of such a court were known (Deut. xvii.).

The "Former Prophets."

The second division of the Hebrew Old Testament is called the Canon of the Prophets and contained eight books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve; the first four are referred to as the "Former Prophets." These are our sources from which to trace the rise of prophecy in Israel to the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. Like the Pentateuch, these books were edited and compiled in their present form later than the events they described, and their final compilation cannot be discussed here.

It is interesting to notice some of the different streams of tradition to which they owe their origin. Two versions of the same event, or series of events, were often independently preserved and stand separately in our Bible; this is very noticeable in the Books of Samuel. The distinctive character of the two versions is clearly seen in the story of the institution of the kingdom of Israel. The earlier version describes the selection and anointing of Saul to be the first king, which is shown to be in accordance with God's purpose as revealed to Samuel (1 Sam. ix., x.). The later version tells of the people demanding a king, contrary to God's will and in spite of Samuel's warning. In this account Samuel said that the people's demand was equivalent to the rejection of Yahweh from being their sole King. Finally, by reason of their persistence, the people's request was granted (1 Sam. viii.).

It appears that these later writers knew the history of the monarchy and the failings of the kings, and believed that the kingdom was a mistake from the beginning. The Books of Samuel were formed by the later combination of these two narratives which dated from the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.

There are also many references to older writings, such as "Deborah's Song" (Judg. v.); "The Book of Jasher," which contained a short poetic description of Joshua's battle (Josh. x.); and "David's Lament" (2 Sam. i.).

Prophetic writings are mentioned—*e.g.*, "The History of Nathan," "The Prophecy of Ahijah" (2 Chron. ix. 29), "The Histories of Shemaiah and of Iddo the Seer" (2 Chron. xii. 15), none of which have been separately preserved. Their contents may possibly find an honoured place in the longer books of Samuel, Kings, or Chronicles.

Court records were kept by scribes from the time of Solomon. Men were appointed to this office for each reign, and their duty was to keep the state record of important events up to date. This record was called "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel,"

or "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (not to be confused with the Book of Chronicles in our Bible). For Solomon's reign there was a special document called "the Acts of Solomon," probably the reason why we have such a detailed picturesque description of this reign (1 Kings xi. 41).

Temple records were also kept by temple scribes; to these we probably owe the beautiful and minute description of Solomon's Temple.

The final compilers of the "Kings" used these earlier prophetic writings, court and temple records, and set them in their own framework. Thus the Pentateuch and the prophetic history as contained in the "Former Prophets" were compiled by writers who looked upon the past in the light of their own knowledge and experience. Hence, it follows that in any endeavour to reconstruct an accurate picture of the events it must always be borne in mind that the traditional story is interwoven with the interpretation of it given by prophets or priests of a later age.

In the case of the later prophets, Amos and Hosea, we possess a contemporary, or almost contemporary, record of their teaching. Amos may have written some of his own sermons; of this we have no evidence, but certainly his teaching was preserved and committed to writing by his immediate followers.

The words of Hosea were also collected and treasured by his disciples, but they were put together regardless of order, which makes his teaching more difficult to understand.

PIONEER PROPHETS

CHAPTER I

MOSES

PART I.—HIS CALL

MOSES IN THE WILDERNESS.

There were shepherds abiding in the wilderness keeping watch over their flocks, and one among them was the man Moses.

What was this wilderness like? and what the manner of life these shepherds experienced therein? Picture a wild waterless country with poor scanty herbage and rough straggling thorn bushes round about the foot of the great mountain group known as Sinai, or often called by the name of Horeb. Bare precipitous cliffs, massive walls of red granite, towered above the sandy rock-strewn plain, forbidding and awful in aloofness, stupendous in silence and strength. Imagine the clouds gathering in the deep clefts and oft-times concealing the lofty rugged peaks. Think of the raging storms, the gorgeous sunsets, the manifold wonders of the mysterious heights.

The difficulty in finding water prevented any settled life, so these nomad shepherds were the only human inhabitants of the district; and even they, perforce, must scatter in the constant search for fresh pasture. Thus, each man was often alone with his sheep in the silence of the desert.

They dwelt in tents and, beyond these and their flocks, had no possessions. Such was their lonely life.

No wonder that God was believed, by men so situ-

ated, to have His dwelling in the secret fastnesses of the mountain and to manifest His presence in the voice of overwhelming thunder or the flash of dazzling lightning.

Men in all ages looked up to inaccessible mountains with bated breath. Long ago Greeks called Mount Olympus the dwelling-place of the gods, and even recently, when Englishmen set out to climb Mount Everest, the Grand Llama of Tibet only granted permission to enter his country for the attempt, on receiving their courteous and tactful assurance that the sanctity of the Mountain should be respected.

Mount Sinai and the surrounding district were thus conceived to he "holy"—*i.e.*, sacred to God. "Holy ground" meant to primitive man land which belonged to God and was reserved for Him alone.

It was near this sacred Sinai that Moses tended the sheep committed to his care by Jethro, his father-in-law. Truly his life had already seen strange contrasts! Born a Hebrew slave, yet reared in the court of a great Pharaoh as a son, he sacrificed everything because he championed the cause of his oppressed and ill-treated brethren.

Recent excavations have made it possible to form some idea of the highly developed civilization of the Nile Delta at that period; of the wisdom, the culture, the art, and religion of the magnificent cities. All this Moses knew, and all this he "forsook."

Moses at the Bush.

The unknown day, when Moses turned to gaze into the "Burning Bush," was of such importance in the world's history that we will try to bring Moses' experience nearer by comparing it with that of two other men, who lived respectively in the first and twentieth century A.D. The accounts speak for themselves:

The Call to Moses (13th Century B.C.).

"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. . . . And when

the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses . . . (and God said):

"I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

"And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. iii.).

THE CALL TO SAUL OF TARSUS (1st Century A.D.).

"As I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, LORD? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spoke to me" (Acts xxii. 6-9).

"And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man" (Acts ix. 7).

THE CALL TO SUNDAR SINGH (20th Century A.D.).

"In the room where I was praying I saw a great light. I thought the place was on fire. I looked round but could find nothing. . . . Then as I prayed and looked into the light, I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ. It had such an appearance of glory and love. . . . I heard a voice saying in Hindustani, 'How long will you persecute Me? I have come to save you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it?' The thought then came to me, 'Jesus Christ is not dead, but living, and it must be He Himself.' So I fell

at His feet and got this wonderful Peace, which I could not get anywhere else."*

A Comparison of the Three.

Consider in what way wireless and television help in the understanding of these remarkable experiences. The wireless set does not create anything. It translates the waves of ether already present in the room, so that we can "hear" them; likewise, when television is perfected we shall be able to "see" them also. These wonderful discoveries extend the possibility of sight and sound, and open our eyes and ears to what was closed. Thus the hitherto far off becomes near.

In the experience of Moses, Saul of Tarsus, and Sundar Singh, each tells us that he "saw" a bright light and heard a voice speaking. We might ask: "Could others have seen and heard?" Saul's companions were aware of an unusual occurrence, some heard a voice, others saw a light, but the vision of the living Christ was closed to them and His voice contained no message.

To all three the experience was an opening of a shut door into the world of spiritual reality. What they "saw" and "heard" was not less but more real than anything they had before known. The experience was too intense to admit of questioning; from the moment of their call, these men knew God because He had revealed Himself to them. The glory overwhelmed them: "Moses hid his face"; Saul "fell on the ground"; Sundar Singh "fell at the feet of Christ." The wonder was inexpressible, but the message was clear.

To each of the three God was revealed as the living God, in sympathy with His world; to each the revelation came to satisfy the hunger, and to meet the need, of the moment. Moses, grieving for his people in bondage, learnt that the God of his forefathers had not forsaken them. He knew their pitiable condition, He had heard their prayers, and purposed to show His compassion by a gracious act of deliverance and the promise of freedom in a land of their own.

* "The Sadhu," p. 6.

Saul was "exceedingly zealous" to be true to his Jewish faith, which he thought required him to persecute the Christians. For this purpose he was on his way to Damascus, when Christ appeared to him. He wrote, in his letter to the Galatians, that the gospel which he preached had come to him "through revelation of Jesus Christ." Thus he learnt to see the God of his fathers revealed in the face of Jesus, whom he had been persecuting; and became a minister of the gospel.

The very words of the call which changed his career dwelt so vividly in his memory that long years after, in describing his experience to King Agrippa, he mentioned that the voice had spoken "in the Hebrew language."

Sundar Singh, like Saul, clung to his old faith and, in great mental agony, strove to reject Christ. He struggled in prayer, until one night he determined to commit suicide if he could not see his way clearly before the morning and gain the peace he sought. It was during that night that the vision of Christ came to him. He heard the call in Hindustani; but it came from the same Lord.

The Revelation of the Name.

Moses was not called only to meditate upon the condition of the Israelites in Egypt, but also to lead them from bondage to freedom. The task before him was bristling with difficulties and dangers, among which perhaps the character of the people themselves proved to be the most immediately serious. Slaves, oppressed by cruelty and consequently crushed in spirit, would naturally be suspicious of any leader, yet Moses knew that to inspire them with confidence and hope was essential.

He pictured himself trying to impart the message and enthusiasm which he was even now receiving, but feared that the declaration, "The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you," might be met with doubt and uncertainty implied by such a question as, "What is His Name?" Moses, therefore, in anticipation of what lay before him, inquired of God: "What shall I say unto

them?" God said unto Moses: "I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exod. iii. 14). What was the significance of the Name?

In Hebrew the words translated God or Gods were El or Elohim. At this time the surrounding nations acknowledged the existence of many national gods. Israel also shared this belief. All trusted in their own special god as concerned exclusively with their welfare. He was known to his own people by a personal name, and was bound to fight for them and give them protection in return for their due observance of his cult. Thus, because he stood in close relationship with them, their foes were his foes and on their success and prosperity his honour depended. The Name now revealed was a personal Name for the God of Israel, in whose authority Moses was commissioned to address the people.

To use the name of a friend should call up the thought of his personality to the mind. Thus a name becomes a symbol of the person, as a flag is of the country.

This new personal Name for God revealed Him as Saviour. The God of Israel's forefathers was now manifested as calling these people, slaves though they were, to fellowship with Himself. Thus the tribes were summoned to Sinai and invited to enter into a covenant with Him. By their willing response they would cease to be a crowd of disunited fugitives and become a nation, united by allegiance to the LORD their God.

THE NAME.

It has been difficult to find how this Sacred Name should be either written or pronounced. In the Hebrew there were only consonants, the vowels were not added until the sixth century A.D.—that is, long after it had ceased to be a spoken language. When this change took place the very great reverence in which the text of the Old Testament Scriptures was held forbade the scribes to alter a single letter of the original. Now, it had been customary, when the Scriptures were read aloud, to substitute the title Adhonai (Lord) or Eloihim (God) in

every place where the Divine Name J.H.V.H. stood, for to utter this most Sacred Name was forbidden. What, then, could be done? The scribes took the vowels *a*, *o*, *a* from the title Adhonai and added these to the consonants J.H.V.H., thus combining in one form what had hitherto been two words. This newly developed word was still to be pronounced Adhonai as before. It should be remembered that sounds seldom correspond exactly between two languages, therefore we need not be surprised that the sound described by the first *a* is now rendered *e* in Jehovah. This word, familiar to English readers, was never in the original Hebrew MS., nor was it ever used.

Hebrew scholars tell us that the correct pronunciation of the original word is most nearly caught in English by spelling it "Yahweh," in which form it will be used in this book; in the Revised Version it was rendered "LORD," in capital letters.

The Meaning of the Name.

The translation of the Sacred Name (Exod. iii. 14) has been differently rendered: "I am that I am;" "I will be that I will be;" "I will become that I will become." The Hebrew verb, here translated, suggested continuous activity; not an action once finished and complete. The LORD of Israel was the God of Revelation, who would be progressively made known as His followers grew in their understanding of Him. Moses knew Him to be the God of the tribes; Elijah saw in Him the God of his land and people; Amos proclaimed Him as the God of the whole earth and of all nations under heaven.

Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would lead His followers into all truth, and we are left wondering at the boundless possibilities of unfolding revelation as men increasingly learn to read God's purpose in history, to discover His law in science, and to open their hearts to adore Him as the fountain of all goodness, beauty, and truth.

PART II.—THE COVENANT OF SINAI

After the exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, Moses, in obedience to God's command, led the Israelites to the foot of the sacred mountain. Picture the encampment in the neighbourhood of Sinai. The people, although hitherto accustomed to level country and the hum of city life, found themselves surrounded with vast cliffs in the mysterious silence of the desert. No wonder they were oppressed with awe and ominous forebodings. Listen to the description of their terror:

"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod. xx. 18, 19).

A solemn crisis in the history of Israel had been reached. None knew what to expect. The multitude, in fear and anxiety, watched their trusted leader ascend to the unknown heights, and passed many long, weary weeks in unrelieved suspense.

Moses was learning how to guide the people in the worship that they had come to render; Yahweh was teaching him how to bring them into union with Himself by means of a sacred covenant.

The Covenant.

Let us try and understand what was implied by a covenant. To primitive people a "covenant" meant a bond of fellowship. All members of one clan or tribe thought of one another as brothers, because they were of the same blood (kin); but they regarded men of another tribe as strangers and enemies. If two tribes wanted to unite in friendship they did so through the "covenant of blood," by which means two kins became one. When such a covenant was to be made, the members of the two tribes assembled, an animal was sacrificed, and the blood, which signified the life, was poured into a vessel. Then everyone present dipped his hands into this

sacred blood, and all were thus united in the bond of kinship, as "blood brothers." A covenant might be made even more sacred if part of the blood was poured out before the altar, for by this act God was called upon to witness it. The same thought may be traced in the judicial British oath, which must be sworn on the Bible.

When Moses came down from the mountain, he taught the people what had been revealed to him both by word and sign; thereby initiating them into the covenant with Yahweh. He built an altar, and after offering animal sacrifices, took the blood, half of which was then sprinkled upon the altar, while the remainder was reserved. The reading of the "Book of the Covenant" before the people followed, and their acceptance was expressed in these words: "All that the LORD hath spoken will we do and be obedient." After this, Moses took the basin with the other half of the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said: "Behold the blood of the Covenant which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."

Those present on this occasion, and all Israelites in later generations, recognized this strange ceremony as the inauguration of the new covenant relationship between Yahweh and His people. The blood, being sprinkled upon the altar and also upon the people, was symbolical of living union; henceforth Yahweh and Israel were to be one.

True, many of the ideas and much of the ritual expressing them were similar to those known to and practised among contemporary nations. In what, then, lay the great difference? The conception of God as presented to Israel was unique. Yahweh chose and called Israel to enter into a covenant with Him. He called, but He did not compel. In Israel's case this bond of union, this living fellowship, could only be formed if accepted in perfect freedom of response. It followed further that, having entered into such a covenant, lasting obligations were involved, and in offering allegiance to Yahweh, Israel promised loyal obedience to His law.

Here, again, we find some similarity with the position

of the surrounding peoples; every nation was bound to obey its god and to accept and practise a code of behaviour, without which social life would be impossible. It was true that the Israelitish moral standard, as expressed in the "Book of the Covenant" and as practised in the period of the Judges, was similar to that of contemporary Semitic nations. Thus, for example, in the "Book of the Covenant" (Exod. xx.-xxiii.) the law of personal revenge, "an eye for an eye," was accepted as Yahweh's word.

But it is very important to realize that obedience was promised, by Israel, not to an unchanging legal Code but to the Living God, who spake by the mouth of His servant, Moses. It was hereafter to be the glory of Israel's prophets gradually to discover more and more of the exalted righteousness of their God and to proclaim an ever higher ethical standard for the nation He had chosen to be His own peculiar people.

PART III.—THE IDEAL PROPHET

A prophet, in the Old Testament writings, meant a spokesman for God, one who declared the Divine will and purpose to His people. Yet prophecy was in no wise confined to Israel, for other nations felt the need of special persons and methods wherewith to ascertain the will of the Deity; indeed, this has been a universal craving of mankind.

In early times the means used to discover the Divine will and to approach God were very similar in Israel and in the surrounding nations. For example, the Pharaoh of Egypt, in Joseph's time, believed that God revealed Himself in dreams. He therefore summoned the magicians and wise men to interpret his dream of the seven lean kine who ate up the seven fat kine. The Hebrew Joseph excelled the Egyptians in his powers of interpretation, and it was to this same gift that he owed his promotion to be Governor of Egypt.

Joseph also used the method of divination, for the much-prized silver cup, which he ordered to be placed

in Benjamin's sack, was valued because he kept it "to divine" the will of God. Later, we find that Aaron understood the Egyptian secret arts and surpassed the magicians in his practice of them. We read: "Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh . . . and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" (Exod. vii. 10-12). Such a tale is similar to those of Indian jugglers or African witch doctors who at the present day mystify and frighten the ignorant.

In ancient Greece the will of God was ascertained by consulting the Oracle at Delphi; it was believed that the god, Apollo, spoke through the prophetess and the sacred lot. Very similar means were employed by the Israelites in the wilderness when they went out to the Tent of Meeting to "inquire of God," and expected to receive an answer through His prophet Moses. Probably the sacred lot was already frequently used, as we know was the case after the settlement in Canaan. Many other resemblances between both the ideas and practices common to Israel and the surrounding peoples will be dealt with as they occur.

A Prophet in Israel.

The prophet in Israel took the place of the diviners, sorcerers, wizards, and others; he was to be a living guide to make God's will known to His people. Gradually the more primitive means of seeking Divine revelation were outgrown and finally forbidden by the Deuteronomic Code (see Deut. xviii.). Israel was then commanded to listen only to men who bore the distinctive marks of a prophet, like Moses. Such could be trusted to speak Yahweh's words, and ought to be tested by the community: "I will put My words into his mouth." "When a prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken." This

test could not, in every case, be applied at the time, but only by succeeding generations; this made it difficult for contemporaries to discern the true from the false prophet.

THE HUMAN MESSENGER.

When we come to consider Moses and the pioneer prophets who followed him, we realize that these men were in no sense mechanical messengers. They were not reiterating spoken words like shorthand-typists writing from dictation or like a pipe conveying water from place to place; far otherwise, they influenced and interpreted the message which they had been entrusted to deliver. The more a prophet was filled with Yahweh's spirit, the more distinctive did his personality become. It required a Moses to bring the Exodus and the Covenant of Sinai to pass, nevertheless they were God's "mighty acts." Yet because God made use of human messengers we find that the progress of revelation was gradual and limited by the capacity of the prophets themselves.

THE IDEAL PROPHET.

Later generations idealized the memory of the great "Moses," and wrote of him: "There hath not arisen a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face" (Deut. xxxiv.).

Two stories especially show in what particular Moses was unique in the estimation of the writers.

On one occasion when Aaron and Miriam were expressing vexation with their brother Moses, all three were summoned to the "Tent of Meeting": "And the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the tent. . . . And He said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, he is faithful in all mine house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of the LORD shall he behold" (Num. xii. 5-8).

Another description is given of the way by which Moses discovered God's will. Listen! "When Moses

entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the tent. . . . And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. xxxiii. 9, 11).

In these passages it is not denied that God used various means to reveal Himself to His prophets, but His relation with Moses was more intimate. The words suggest a living fellowship, likened to a friendship, in which God was inspiring the conscious mind of His servant. As a "friend of God" growing in knowledge and understanding of His will, the prophet would unquestionably become a forthteller of His present plan and a foreteller of His secret purpose. Is not this the goal of prophecy?

Moses was reported to have said once: "Would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets" (Num. xi. 29). Christ said: "No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). Is not this the ideal relationship between God and man?

CHAPTER II

DEBORAH

The Times of Deborah.

The earliest record describing the experience of the children of Israel on entering the Promised Land is found in the Book of Judges. This book has preserved the traditional popular tales of local heroes, regarded as Yahweh's champions, who freed their people from oppressive tyrants. The Israelites who crossed the Jordan under Joshua had all been born and bred in the desert to a wandering life dependent on their flocks and herds. They had lived very simply, and were accustomed to conceive of God in a childlike way as marching onward to lead them into the land that they were to receive from Him. Some think that the Ark signified God's presence to the Israelites, and that when the encampment moved away from Sinai they believed Yahweh went forth with the Ark. Thus it was customary, when the camp moved, for Moses to pray: "Rise up, O LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered" (Num. x. 35).

What did they find when they came into Canaan? The land was occupied by peoples very like themselves in race and language, known to us by the general name of Canaanites. Though very small, about the size of Wales, the country was so broken up that the tribes were probably unaware of what happened to any but their near neighbours.

Throughout the history, the Jordan valley was an almost impassable barrier to the ordinary folk on either side of it. The valley bottom was deep and shut in by steep cliffs, so that the climate was sub-tropical. One of David's mighty men was said to have killed a lion in the midst of snow; a feat only possible in a few

districts where great varieties of climate can be found at different altitudes very near together. The city of Jericho was situated where the valley broadened out, and was called the "city of palm-trees." Along most of its length the Jordan river was a torrent rushing at great speed, often in eddies and whirlpools, and could only be safely crossed at the fords. Therefore it is that frequent mention is made of the fords, and that to hold them was of immense importance. The most noted ford in Israel's story was the one opposite Gilgal, where Joshua crossed with the people and set up the thanksgiving memorial stones.

The land on the east was a great contrast to the enervating climate of the Jordan valley. Here among the bare and waterless hills of Gilead, as also in the Negeb or waste land of the south, the Israelites pursued the same occupations as in the desert. The land was not fit for agriculture, therefore there could be no settled life. The shepherds and herdsmen wandered with their flocks in search of food and water according to the seasons, the fear of storms or the raids of enemies.

On the west of Jordan, the country in the centre and south was mostly hilly, excepting for the open corn-growing plain of Esdraelon. But the hill-slopes were rich in orchards of fig and apricot, olive groves, and terraced vineyards.

The Canaanites were small cultivators. They lived, five or ten miles apart, in walled cities for protection against their enemies. During recent excavations remains of some of these cities have been found on the tops of hills. They were poor and miserable: one storied houses built of rough stones stuck together with mud; very narrow streets, probably filthily dirty, infested with fleas, full of wandering dogs and smelly beyond description, much as are the cities of Palestine to-day. The surrounding walls for defence were tremendously strong. At Gezer there were two, each sixteen feet thick; it is interesting to recall that this is one of the cities mentioned in Judges which the Israelites were unable to take. Jebus, which was also mentioned, re-

mained in the hands of the Jebusites until the time of David.

We can imagine how hard it was for a people used to desert life to attack a walled city with no weapons; probably the Canaanites resisted by hurling stones on their heads as they climbed the hill (*cf.* Judg. ix. 53). Nevertheless, they had more success in the hill country, where small forays were possible, than in the plains. The Canaanites had a yet greater advantage over them in the lowland, for here they could use their iron chariots with protruding scythes to mow down their enemies, and against these terrible instruments the Israelites were powerless.

By the time of Deborah the conquest of Canaan was still very partial. For the most part Israelites and Canaanites were living side by side: "Israel dwelt among the Canaanites"; and even united with them by intermarriage (Judg. iii. 5).

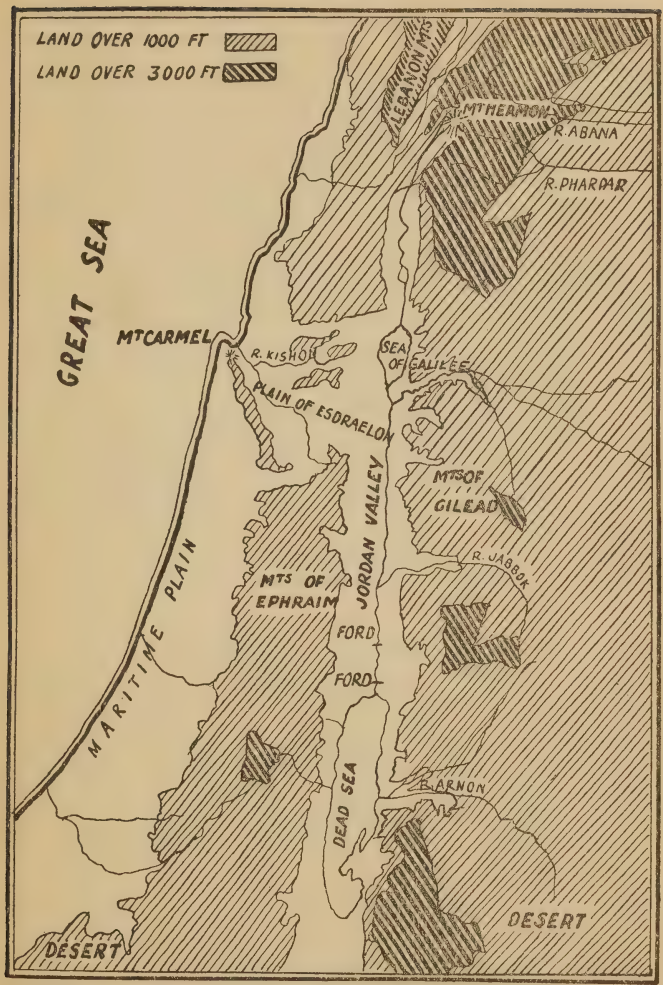
Deborah in War.

A great attack was made in the open plain of Esdraelon led by Sisera, a general of the Canaanites, to drive the Israelites out of the most fertile part of the country. Terrified of the war chariots, they were in despair when Deborah rose to meet the danger.

The finest account of the story was preserved in Deborah's Triumph Song (Judg. v.). In it we feel the inspiration of her faith, her strong martial courage, and her exaltation in the hour of victory. This song was doubtless sung for generations in Israel before it was committed to writing, and is now considered by some scholars to be one of the earliest written fragments of the Old Testament.

Deborah pictured Yahweh as the God of Sinai, revealed in the awe-inspiring grandeur of thunder and lightning; a terrible, stern God of the desert, Who marched forth from His dwelling-place to lead His people to victory.

She sung of the days before she arose, when every Israelite had lived in fear and trembling, when no one



This map illustrates the broken and varied nature of the country, which explains the gradual conquest and settlement of the Israelites in Canaan.

took the lead and the scattered people forgot Yahweh and "chose new gods." She sang, too, of the splendid response made to her call to war: "For that the people offered themselves willingly, Bless ye the LORD."

She vented biting sarcasm on the slackers; cursed the cowardly and praised the valiant.

Yet the victory was not Israel's; it was the LORD'S: "the LORD came down for me against the mighty. Bless ye the LORD." She triumphed in the manifestation of His power when, amid the din of battle, the Canaanites were swept away by the rush of the flooded River Kishon and crushed in the terrible stampede of horses.

She exulted in the two tragic scenes which completed the triumph of the day.

"Blessed above women shall Jael be." Jael who struck Sisera, the defeated general, to the ground to die at her feet; whilst his mother stood at the lattice, watching and listening for the chariot wheels that would come no more.

"So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD,
But let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

JUDG. v. 31.

To the Christian the story is barbarous, yet Deborah was, nevertheless, a pioneer of her age. In her conception Yahweh was the LORD of the scattered Israelites; their enemies were His enemies. She was certain that Yahweh demanded loyalty and devotion from His people, and called for whole-hearted and unflinching service. Filled with this faith, she rallied a united force in His name and triumphed in full assurance of His mighty power.

THE PROSE STORY OF DEBORAH.

Another tradition of Deborah was preserved in the prose narrative. Although the song was older than the prose story, yet it is probable that the latter contained a true picture of the heroine but a perverted one of Jael. The two versions of Jael's story are here compared.

The Song—

"She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer;
And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote through his head.
Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples.
At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay:
At her feet he bowed, he fell:
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

JUDG. v. 26, 27.

Prose Narrative.—"Then Jael Heber's wife took a tent-pin, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the pin into his temples, and it pierced through into the ground; for he was in a deep sleep; so he swooned and died" (Judg. iv. 21).

In the latter account Jael's act was mean and cowardly, very different from the fierce courage of the "Jael" who won Deborah's praise. Possibly some were jealous of her and altered the story to her dishonour; or possibly the popular tale was changed little by little as it passed from mouth to mouth. Both suggestions would be equally true to human nature.

DEBORAH IN PEACE.

The mention of Deborah as judge, sitting under her palm-tree in the hill country of Ephraim, should probably stand in order of time after her triumph. Her victory over the Canaanites gave her prestige and drew the Israelites living in that part of the country to seek her adjudication to settle their disputes. Her quick insight and ready wit helped her in giving judgment; possibly she also used the sacred lot or consulted the sacred tree. Tree divination was practised as late as the time of David. On one occasion David inquired of the LORD as to what tactics he should pursue against the Philistines. He was told to expect the answer from the tree: "When thou hearest the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees, then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then is the Lord gone out before thee to smite the Philistines" (2 Sam. v. 24). Thus did the soothsayer, who

was thought to be gifted with the power of divination, interpret the wind rustling in the tree-tops. This sounds very strange to us, but those who used these means believed that the judgment came from God.

Deborah was called "prophetess" because men thought of her as acting for Yahweh as judge in peace, even as she had won the victory in His name.

CHAPTER III

GIDEON

The Coming of the Midianites.

The Israelites were now living amongst the Canaanitish population, whose presence among them was a continual menace, but this was not all they had to fear. They were open to surprise attacks from raiders on the east of Jordan who coveted the more fertile lands of Central Palestine, and also from their neighbours the Philistines who held the sea coast.

At the time of Gideon, the Midianites were particularly aggressive. Now these Midianites, who were nomads, made constant raids from the other side of Jordan, especially during the harvest season. It was their custom to come, bringing their tents, with long strings of camels to carry off their booty. Their numbers struck terror into the inhabitants, who fled before them into hiding-places to live in caves, while the raiders stole all the cattle and grain they could find, and went away with their prizes only to return in greater force the next year.

The Israelite Cultivators.

Such victories as Deborah's, in the Plain of Esdraelon, had made it possible for the Israelites to gain possession of some of the corn-growing land; therefore we are not surprised to read that the Midianite raids took place after "Israel had sown." For fear of discovery and so of losing his grain, Gideon was hidden in a cave, beating out his wheat in a wine-press, when he was called to service. Now, a wine-press such as was in use at that time consisted of a large tank hewn out of the rock, where the grapes were pressed by men walking upon them with naked feet, the juice running along a trough into another deeper rock-tank. Obviously, wine-presses were only made for use, and the story showed that some

Israelites already owned vineyards in the hill country of Ephraim.

Thus we may picture them beginning to build homesteads, to acquire land, and to learn the arts of agriculture and vine-dressing. It takes time to settle in a new country, and there was much to learn before the herdsmen of the desert could successfully become small cultivators. Fruit-trees, especially vines, needed not only constant but skilful attention all the year round. Moreover, the climate was very uncertain, so also the harvest; the fruits were luxuriant but the rains might fail, and if they did hard times soon followed.

When the Israelites began to settle alongside the Canaanites, they naturally learned from them the traditions of the country; and in order to earn their livelihood observed the best ways and means of cultivating and utilizing the resources of the soil.

The Baal of Canaan.

Though the Canaanites could teach their neighbours how to till the ground and harvest the corn, they believed that it was their god, Baal, who gave life to the seed. They called him Baal because the name meant owner, and Baal was the lord of their land of Canaan, the giver of life to their flocks and herds, their fields, their orchards and their children. He was the head of their community and he desired to see them prosperous and happy.

His Worship.

Outside their cities, on the highest ground available, were the sanctuaries of Baal; here his worshippers were reminded of his presence by the symbols of the sacred tree and sacred pillar-stones. At festival seasons, before and after corn harvest, worshippers thronged the sanctuaries to share their thankful merry-makings with him. There were great feasts, in which Baal was invited to take part. Some of the fruits of the ground were laid upon his altar as food set apart for him, and the blood

of the animals, which had been slaughtered for the feast, was poured out before the altar and sprinkled upon it. Thus the worshippers believed themselves to be united with their god in the joyous fellowship of the common meal. But Baal was conceived of as a superman, stronger and more powerful, yet like a man in character, tastes, and passions. His worship was full of religious excitement accompanied by dancing, excessive drinking and organized vice, in supposed honour of fertility; similar orgies are connected with Hindu worship to-day. Numbers of terra-cotta plaques of a female goddess, Baal's consort, have been excavated at the high places of Canaan. Baal had his priests and prophets, but they were not preachers of morality; their duty was to carry out a ceremonial ritual, in return for which Baal granted prosperity to the land.

How could they raise the ideals of their people when they had no vision of the true character of God and of His moral demands?

The Worship of Yahweh in Canaan.

Now the Israelites were faced with big questions. Was Yahweh their God the LORD of Canaan? They had learnt to know Him in the desert; they had recognized His presence in their camp and thanked Him for their flocks and herds. They had followed Him as their Captain in war, and sought His judgment in peace. But was Yahweh all-powerful in Canaan? Could He give life to the land and make it fruitful? Did the destruction of the harvest-field by an enemy raid indicate that Yahweh was unable to protect His people in the plains? Did the failure of the orchards or the vineyards prove that Yahweh was powerless to give His people wine and oil, and that Baal, the real owner, would not prosper any cultivators who refused the worship in which he took delight?

Long afterwards, the prophet Hosea, looking back into past history, said that Israel in her foolishness did not know that Yahweh gave her "the corn and the wine and the oil" (Hos. ii. 8).

THE SANCTUARIES.

This uncertainty was all the more dangerous because of the presence of the Canaanitish sanctuaries, many of which were doubtless still in full use, though some were deserted. As the Israelites became a settled people they felt the need for fixed places of worship. What was their attitude to be towards these existing sanctuaries? The question of deserting Yahweh for Baal did not present itself, but what loyalty to Yahweh demanded of them appears to have been differently viewed. There were some, probably rare, cases of open disloyalty to Yahweh when individuals or groups of the people made a covenant with the Baal worshippers: "Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god" (Judg. viii. 33).

In other districts, probably where the Canaanites had been driven out, some Israelites, like Gideon's father, used the ancient "high places" for the worship of Yahweh. Just so, in Christian Rome, heathen temples were turned into Christian churches; or in Mohammedan countries Christian churches were used for mosques. At these sacred places the groves of trees (*asherah*) or single oaks, and also the stone pillars (*macceboth*) remained standing, but were connected with the worship of Yahweh. They probably continued in use centuries after their original significance was lost and their association with Baal worship forgotten. Similarly, in our own day, many people use the expression "touch wood," though they do not for a moment intend to call upon the spirit of the tree to keep them from bad luck, yet that was the origin of the saying. In the same way, Israelites of later times reverenced the sacred *asherah* only as a matter of custom, yet they would have regarded their removal with superstitious fear. Both the *asherah* and the pillar were forbidden by the Deuteronomic Code (Deut. xvi. 21) as unworthy to stand beside an altar of Yahweh.

THE STORY OF GIDEON (Judg. vi., vii.).

Gideon was an example of a leader who refused to allow any association between the worship of Yahweh and that of Baal. After the revelation of Yahweh's saving purpose for Israel, which marked his call, Gideon was filled with consuming loyalty. He commemorated the place where the angel had appeared to him by erecting an altar to Yahweh; and with fervid zeal razed the Baal altar, where his father had hitherto worshipped, to the ground, and cut down the *asherah*. This caused terrible consternation among the villagers, and Gideon was only saved from death by his father's wise suggestion that Baal himself should be left to take vengeance upon the man who had destroyed his altar. Probably it was expected that Gideon would suddenly drop dead; that he escaped unscathed must have won him renown. The pluck shown in this and other deeds of valour, as also the gift of leadership displayed, were recognized by his fellows; who explained them as proof that the "spirit of the LORD" came upon him. Gideon's strength lay in his certainty that Yahweh had commissioned him to deliver Israel from the Midianites, and in his confidence that Yahweh's presence was in their midst. To realize this, we have only to compare "the Gideon" who hid in a cave for his own protection with "the Gideon" who routed the Midianite camp with a handful of followers.

By two tests he discovered which among his host of followers were entirely devoted to Yahweh's cause. First he proclaimed: "Whosoever is fearful and trembling let him return." Then he led those who remained to a river, where he stood by to observe how they drank. All were thirsty, and all drank; when they knelt down, the great majority bent right over to the water, forgetful of aught else save their own thirst, but a few only drank by putting their hand to the water, whilst they kept a constant watch. Of these latter he numbered three hundred. Gideon then took these proved men, divided them into companies, armed them with trumpets and torches inside empty pitchers, and ordered

them to stand at three corners of the Midianite camp during the night and to follow his directions: "Look on me, and do likewise . . . when I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, For the LORD and for Gideon." When they were in their appointed places: "The three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD and of Gideon" (Judg. vii. 17, 18, 20).

The sight of the flaring torches, the noise of the trumpets, and the shout of victory alarmed the camp and struck superstitious terror into the heart of the Midianites, who fled before the dauntless courage of "the three hundred."

Stories of the exploits of popular heroes are seldom historically accurate, especially when they were first handed down by oral tradition; even reports of journalists cannot always be relied upon for contemporary news!

The purport of this story was not to give instruction in military tactics of the period, but to record how Gideon taught Israel to put entire confidence in Yahweh as all-sufficient to meet her need.

CHAPTER IV

JEPHTHAH

THE STORY OF JEPHTHAH (Judg. xi.).

Jephthah, like Gideon, was an outstanding leader, who was felt by his contemporaries to be a man of God, possessed by the Spirit of Yahweh. For this reason he was chosen by the leading men of Gilead to defend his country from Ammonite invasion.

The king of Ammon was making war, because he said that the Israelites had robbed his people of their rightful territory. This land, he insisted, must be peaceably restored, or the Amorites would take it by force. Jephthah answered that the Israelites, coming from the wilderness, had asked Sihon, the then king of Ammon, to allow them a free passage through his country, but he had refused and offered battle. Yahweh, God of Israel, had given His people victory, and the Amorites lost part of their land in consequence.

"So now the LORD, the God of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel, and shouldst thou possess them? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess" (Judg. xi. 23, 24).

These words of Jephthah's are of great importance, because in them he acknowledged that Chemosh, the national god of Moab and Ammon, had given his people their lands, but that Yahweh, the God of Israel, had proved Himself stronger than the other gods and taken the Amorite land away from them to give to His own people. Jephthah, therefore, firmly believed Yahweh to be the giver of the land owned by Israel, though he was sure of the existence of other national gods, who sought the welfare of their own peoples.

But the king of Ammon would not listen to Jephthah's arguments, and attacked Israel.

Jephthah's Sacrifice.

Jephthah went forth to war with a vow of devotion to Yahweh on his lips: "If thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into mine hand, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

He returned home victorious. "Behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child . . . it came to pass when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter . . . I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back." She, too, was willing to offer herself, and, after two months spent in the hills with her companions, she returned to her father, "who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed."

The custom of human sacrifice was common in the neighbouring countries and among the Canaanites, but, though Jephthah used a heathen practice, he was entirely devoted to Yahweh, to Whom he dedicated his offering. His vow and its fulfilment expressed a spirit of devoted sacrifice, while it revealed a primitive conception of God. That Jephthah thought such a sacrifice could be pleasing to Yahweh showed that his idea of the character of Israel's God was very similar to the beliefs held by Moabites, Amorites, Canaanites, and others concerning their gods.

A Code for the Laity.

The difficult position of the Israelites in Gideon's time has been shown; in Jephthah's story we witness a loyal worshipper of Yahweh dedicating a heathen custom in His honour. This indicated the already obvious need for a code of regulations to guide the general public. The ordinary laity wanted to know what loyalty to Yahweh involved; they needed directions for the conduct of worship and of daily life. Their position has some resemblance to that existing in some parts of the world to-day, where unlettered Christians are called to witness

to a purer faith and a higher morality in the midst of a heathen population. These Christians have to decide whether they must entirely abstain from sharing in heathen festivities or what customs are still allowable for them to follow.

It has been forcefully suggested that the laws contained in Deuteronomy xii.-xxvi. formed a "Code for the Laity," compiled while Israelites were still living amongst Canaanites and written to meet this very need.* If this is the explanation, then some of the laws may even date from the period of the Judges, others from the early monarchy.

When the code is carefully read, many of these appear to have been framed with the purpose of keeping the religion of Israel pure from contamination by surrounding heathenism, especially Baalism. The Israelite was taught to worship at none save Yahweh's altars, to keep His feasts, to follow His priests, and listen to the word of His prophets. Further, he was taught to regard Yahweh as the LORD of all life, so that obedience to Him extended to the details of daily life—*e.g.*, forbidding a man to seize the widow's garments for her debt and ordering him to leave the gleanings of field and vineyard for the benefit of the poor, in grateful remembrance of the mercy of God towards his ancestors while slaves in Egypt (Deut. xxiv. 17-22). Any borrowing of heathen customs would be, therefore, quite unthinkable and was strictly forbidden; for instance, "There shall not be found with thee anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire" (Deut. xviii. 10).

If this law had been in existence in Jephthah's day, he might have acted differently!

We will proceed to consider one example out of many to illustrate the way in which the Israelite was taught to recognize Yahweh as God of Canaan.

* Welch, "The Code of Deuteronomy."

THE OFFERING OF FIRSTFRUITS.

Every small-holder was directed to bring his first ripe fruits to a sanctuary dedicated to Yahweh, where there was a priest of Yahweh, in acknowledgment that all the fruits of the land were His gift. When the worshipper arrived at the sanctuary with his fruits in a basket, he was to take part in the following service:

Order of Service (to be said by those bringing offerings to the priest):

> "I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come into the land which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us."

The priest shall then take the basket and place it before the altar. Then followed the Creed to be repeated after the priest:

> "A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number; and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and we cried unto the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression: and the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm . . . and He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land."

Dedication of the offering:

> "And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O LORD, hast given me."

After the offering, worship shall be rendered before the altar, then the worshipper shall return home to rejoice with his family and household, remembering that the LORD is the giver of all (Deut. xxvi.).*

* See "The Code of Deuteronomy," Welch, p. 25.

CHAPTER V

SAMUEL

BIBLE PASSAGES: *The Earliest Story of Samuel and Saul* (1 Sam. ix.-x. 16; xi. 1-13; xv.).

SAMUEL THE SEER.

Saul, a fine young man of princely stature, was beginning to weary of the search for his father's asses, when suddenly his servant made a suggestion; why should they not make inquiry of a certain local celebrity who lived in a neighbouring city? The servant described him as a "man of God," highly respected and able to forecast the future correctly; in fact the right person to consult as to the whereabouts of the asses.

To Saul the idea seemed quite natural, but he hesitated to go to him for want of a fitting present; this, however, was also supplied by his servant. Both were evidently accustomed to seek counsel from a wise man of this kind in return for a fee.

As they climbed the hill to the city, they met some young women coming down to draw water from the well and questioned them: "Is the seer here?" The women had no hesitation in answering, for "the seer" was well known to everyone. They told Saul to make haste that they might meet him before he went up to the "high place," because it was a great occasion. It was a festival and many people were gathered together to await the seer's blessing of the sacrifice, before they all united in the festive meal.

The two travellers hastened to follow the directions, and as they walked through the gate into the city, whom should they meet but the seer himself, Samuel! The writer of this story added, as a comment, that the name "seer" was in his day becoming out of date and being replaced by the word "prophet." The word "seer" suggested a man gifted with what are now called psychic powers. Such a one would be regarded

as a strange, uncanny person, who for this reason was all the more venerated and consulted as a living oracle.

Samuel the Prophet.

The meeting between Saul and Samuel was no chance happening. Samuel was keenly expecting a visit from a certain man, whose coming had been foretold to him the day before.

At this time the Israelites were suffering cruelly from invasion, which was terribly galling to the rising national pride; Samuel acutely felt the Philistine tyranny to be a dishonour to the God of Israel. He sought counsel in the matter and it was shown him that Yahweh purposed to raise up a king to free Israel, and unite the people into one nation.

When Samuel saw the young man he recognized in his fine distinguished person the future king, whose coming had been predicted, and gradually prepared him for the startling announcement. They went up together to the feast, and Samuel set him in the place of greatest honour, and not until next morning was he told of the call to kingship and "anointed" in Yahweh's name: "Is it not that the LORD hath anointed thee to be prince over His inheritance?"

Thus the prophet called the king.

Saul among the Prophets.

Before they parted Samuel gave Saul three signs, the truth of which could be immediately tested to strengthen his trust. The third of these proved to be of great importance. He told him that on his return through a certain city where there was a Philistine garrison, he would see "a band of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a timbrel, and a pipe, and a harp before them; and they shall be prophesying: and the spirit of the LORD shall come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them and shall be turned into another man."

Saul followed Samuel's directions, and no sooner met with the band of prophets than he caught their en-

thusiasm. He prophesied with them, even excelling them in fervour, greatly to the astonishment of all his former friends and acquaintances, who were evidently horrified that Saul, of all men, should be found in such an assembly. They questioned one another: "What is this that has come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" A saying so oft repeated that it became a proverb in Israel.

Why were they called Prophets?

Imagine this band of prophets! Should we not have described them as thoroughly over-excited and unbalanced? When we compare this with other stories of these and earlier times, it becomes clear that "abnormal" persons were commonly believed to be inspired as the only available explanation of abnormality.

Men of extraordinary physical strength, like Samson, were spoken of as filled with God's Spirit (even though in Samson's case his character was immoral), as were also men of remarkable courage, like Gideon.

In like manner, persons of unaccountable behaviour, such as the madman, the neurotic, or the drunkard, struck the onlookers with awe and were also believed to be mediums for the supernatural. It has to be remembered that nothing was known about the working of the sub-conscious mind, or about mental illness; therefore all the conditions during which a man's words and actions are not governed by his conscious reason were thought to be direct manifestations of God's working. Man looked on helplessly in the presence of that which he could not understand. It was written that even Saul's fits of anger were attributed to an "evil spirit from the Lord."

Because God's presence was believed to be the cause of these strange conditions, some prophets tried to attain this state of excitement, hoping they might be used to bring men into touch with supernatural power.

On an earlier occasion Miriam, "the prophetess," tried to secure the same result by going out with a group of dancing women (Exod. xv.).

Another story of Saul tells that he lay naked on the ground "prophesying" all day and all night (1 Sam. xix.). Wild dancing and singing was a common expression of religious fervour also among the Canaanites and many other peoples. Mention is made again much later of excited and unintelligible speech, in the story of the Christian Church at Corinth, where the "gift of tongues" was possessed by many members. St. Paul recognized its possible value but did not approve of its use, save when it was accompanied by the gift of interpretation to make the strange utterances intelligible to the congregation.

Samuel and the Prophets.

Samuel plainly recognized the power of these ecstatic prophets to stimulate a religious revival. Like him, they were doubtless roused by the Philistine tyranny to cry for liberation in Yahweh's name. Thus religion was the inspiration of their patriotism, one God, one king, one nation.

Samuel, the head over the prophetic bands, directed Saul to unite with these enthusiasts, invoking their aid in seeking for divine power to build the future kingdom.

Saul the King.

Samuel looked upon Saul as the one "anointed" to save Israel from dishonour, and the immediate result was successful, for he brilliantly seized the first opportunity by leading an expedition to the relief of Jabesh Gilead, a city besieged by the Ammonites.

One day, when out in a field of oxen, he noticed groups of people in great distress, and, on inquiry, heard that messengers had arrived from Jabesh Gilead with shocking news. The enemy, having taken the city by a long siege, required that the citizens should have their right eyes put out as a token of their submission, and had allowed them only seven days to consider whether or no they would surrender the city on these terms.

Saul was filled with righteous wrath; cut his oxen in

pieces, and sent them as a summons far and near with the message: "Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen." All who saw Saul's zeal felt that it came from an outpouring of Yahweh's Spirit, and the response to the call was spontaneous. Jabesh Gilead was relieved and Saul won himself renown in the hearts of the people. Some even wanted to take advantage of the hour of victory to put to death certain persons who had been known to resent Saul's leadership; but Saul showed magnanimity in the hour of victory and said: "There shall not a man be put to death this day, for to-day the LORD hath wrought deliverance in Israel" (1 Sam. xi. 13).

SAUL AND DAVID.

Saul's character was greatly marred by his jealousy of David; yet even there we catch glimpses of a fine nature. The most remarkable instance was on the occasion (twice told) during his pursuit of David, when David found him sleeping at the entrance to a cave, and standing over him cut off a piece of the skirt of his robe. Saul awoke later to discover that David had spared his life. Immediately he was filled with impetuous contrition and cried out: "Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rendered to me good, whereas I have rendered to thee evil" (1 Sam. xxiv. 17).

The lament of David over the death of Saul and Jonathan was a beautiful testimony of true friendship, and showed David's readiness to give honour where honour was due. In after ages Saul's greatness was eclipsed by his successor, David, who was "anointed" by Samuel to succeed him in the kingdom.

In order to get any right understanding of the sin for which Saul was condemned by Samuel, it is necessary to inquire what were the primitive ideas concerning Yahweh, prevalent at the time, and held by both prophet and king. Both believed that Israel's military expeditions, whether for aggression or defence, were commanded and led by Yahweh; king and people were therefore bound to fight for Him. Such ideas were only

possible because gods were still thought of as national and Yahweh was regarded as exclusively the God of Israel.

Saul and Samuel.

Now Samuel came to Saul to command him to make a "holy war" upon Amalek, to destroy utterly "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." In the Revised Version the margin reads "devote" for "utterly destroy." The word "devote" showed that the original idea was that everything in the conquered city or land belonged to the God of the conquering army. The soldiers were not allowed to accept any ransom, to carry off women or booty; but were to acknowledge that all belonged to the God who had given them the victory. For this reason everything was destroyed as the way of devoting all to God. This custom, called the "ban," was common among all Israel's neighbours; so Samuel was here using a known method of warfare in dedicating it to Yahweh. Such a custom united the soldiers in the certainty that they were Yahweh's "host," fighting against the army of another God.

Saul defeated the Amalekites but did not carry out the command. He "utterly destroyed all the people," but took the king, Agag, alive, and kept "the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good" (1 Sam. xv. 9). Thus the motive which guided Saul and his army, appeared to be personal gain rather than pity for the distressed. Otherwise why did they destroy the Amalekite people but not the well-fed cattle, the helpless children but not the king?

Meanwhile it was revealed to Samuel that Saul was not fulfilling the command. Whether God spoke to him through a vision or by quickened powers of intuition is not known. In consequence of the revelation he spent the night in prayer, and in the early morning arose without hesitation, certain how to speak and act. He felt himself directed to a meeting with Saul at Gilgal.

When this meeting took place, Saul said that he had performed Yahweh's command, but Samuel's trust was shaken and his senses on the alert. He listened and watched for a proof of his suspicions, and then asked: "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Saul finding his deceit discovered owned to having saved the king alive, but laid the blame for taking the cattle upon the people, for he said they purposed to sacrifice them to the LORD in Gilgal.

Samuel answered: "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. . . . Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Sam. xv. 22).

Saul met these terrible words with contrition and fervent expressions of renewed loyalty to Yahweh; but the sentence was never revoked.

Samuel took the alien king and publicly slew him before Yahweh's altar at the sanctuary in Gilgal.

SAMUEL'S IDEA OF GOD.

There was no lack of devotion in Samuel. He realized that Yahweh could not be satisfied by material offerings, however rich the sacrifices; He required followers prepared to carry out His will without reserve. Samuel spoke and acted barbarously, because of his lack of vision. The breadth of Yahweh's universal providence, and the depth of His mercy and forgiveness were alike hidden from their earlier prophet. Later prophets likewise called for perfect devotion to perform Yahweh's will; but their conception of His will had been changed and developed with unfolding revelation. Thus the LORD, as revealed to Hosea, called to His people: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos. vi. 6).

Words significantly quoted by Christ: "Go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. ix. 13).

CHAPTER VI

NATHAN

(2 Sam. vii., xii.)

LONG years had passed since David the Shepherd had guarded his flocks on the pastures of Bethlehem. As hero, friend, and king, largely through the charm of his personality, he had won the allegiance of all the tribes. The hitherto impregnable fortress of Jerusalem had at length been taken by his great daring, and he himself had led the triumphant procession, bringing the sacred Ark into the new capital. All Israel was stirred with enthusiasm to see the king himself dancing and singing before the Ark, and offering the sacrifices in Jerusalem. Large crowds enjoyed the festive meal, and were filled with thanks and praise to the LORD of the armies of Israel, Who had prospered His people and given them the blessing of peace.

DAVID'S ASPIRATION.

David had reached the climax of his career, and it was at this moment of national rejoicing that he summoned the prophet Nathan and confided in him his earnest desire to build a temple as a dwelling-place for the Ark: "See, now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains." Nathan was stirred with sympathy and responded readily: "Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee" (2 Sam. vii. 2, 3).

THE MESSAGE GIVEN TO NATHAN.

But that same night God taught Nathan in vision that he had spoken inadvisedly. When morning dawned, the prophet accordingly repaired to the king burdened with his message, which God had imparted to him.

He told David to recall that God had *not* dwelt in

an house in the wilderness and had never ordered such a house to be built. Nevertheless, permission to carry out his wish should be granted to his son, in whose line the kingdom would be confirmed. "He shall build an house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. vii. 13).

Possibly the postponement of permission to erect the temple and the warning words spoken by Nathan were intended to guard against the insidious dangers of the more elaborate forms of worship, such as were already developing with the advance of civilization and the beginnings of commercial life. The prophets constantly reminded Israel that the LORD had been revealed in the simplicity of the desert and called for the reality of spiritual worship.

This truth was deeply impressed, after the Temple was built, in the words of the Dedication Prayer: "But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have builded?" (1 Kings viii. 27). Words which are worthy to be set alongside those of Christ to the woman of Samaria: "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth" (John iv. 24).

DAVID'S FALL.

The second appearance of Nathan before David was indeed on a sad occasion and in connection with a grave crisis, the supreme importance of which was being overlooked.

Now it happened on this wise: David, enticed by passionate desire for the beautiful Bathsheba, had encompassed the death of her husband, Uriah, and taken her to be his wife. The tale of the king's pleasure had run on smoothly to its goal and Bathsheba bare him a son.

The writer who recorded the story here abruptly interrupted his narrative with a comment: "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD" (2 Sam. xi. 27). This was the terrible truth which

David had ignored. Yahweh, the God revealed on Sinai, was a moral God, therefore His "anointed" was not free to act like other kings who did not owe Him allegiance. What David had done might be ever so usual in Oriental courts, but the God of Israel viewed such acts with displeasure. This was the crux of the matter; because the character of Yahweh was wholly different from that of the gods of other nations, therefore His standards were higher both for king and people.

THE PARABLE AND ITS MEANING.

Nathan the prophet was sent to lead David to review his conduct in the searchlight of God's moral demands. He did so in this parable:

"There were two men in one city; the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

"And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man that was come unto him" (2 Sam. xii. 1-4).

Imagine the tense moments while Nathan told his parable. David, startled into attention, waxed hotter and hotter in indignation against the mirrored picture of himself; his sense of justice was awakened and his pity stirred until, in deepest humility and with heartfelt contrition, he learnt to view his own act from God's standpoint and to feel something of Yahweh's hatred against sin.

Nathan predicted the death of the child, and David recognized it to be his punishment, but divine forgiveness was sealed by the gift of another son to Bathsheba, even Solomon, in whom the promises were fulfilled.

CHAPTER VII

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Solomon's Reign:

1. The Anointing of Solomon (1 Kings i. 32-53).
   His Dream (1 Kings iii. 4-15).
   His Wisdom (1 Kings iv. 30-34).
2. The Growth of Commerce (1 Kings v.; ix. 26-28).
3. The Royal Court
   Palaces (1 Kings vii. 1-12).
   Princesses (1 Kings xi. 1-8).
   Court Fare (1 Kings iv. 21-28).
   Luxury (1 Kings x. 14-29).
   Queen of Sheba's Visit (1 Kings x. 1-13).
4. The Building and Dedication of the Temple (1 Kings vi.; vii. 13-51; viii).

The Consequences of Solomon's Reign:

1. The Prophecy of Ahijah (1 Kings xi. 26-40).
2. The Division of the Kingdom (1 Kings xii. 1-24).

SOLOMON'S INHERITANCE.

David was anointed king while he was still an unknown shepherd lad, and he had had to win the kingdom through years of stress and patient waiting, but at his death Solomon inherited his father's position and prestige. To secure a peaceful succession, David had planned Solomon's coronation during his own lifetime. With keen sagacity, David summoned the leaders of the three chief parties in Jerusalem, Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the leading general, one of the famous band of "mighty men," and he invited these three representative leaders to co-operate in the coronation in these words: "Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon, my son, to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel." Thus did Solomon ride in public procession through the streets of

Jerusalem, and he was anointed in the sight of all the people amid great jubilation and shouts of "God save King Solomon." These hearty cheers rang out in welcome, because Solomon was his father's son and the peoples' hopes were high.

Solomon's Opportunity.

A splendid opportunity lay before Solomon to develop the country and to accomplish the sacred task of building the Temple. To form an idea of the world of his day, we need to study the map and note the position of the countries with which he came into contact.

The coast-line of Palestine is very straight, divided sharply by the ridge of Carmel. To the north of Mount Carmel lived the Phœnicians on a narrow strip of inhospitable coast, cut off from their hinterland by a barrier of mountains. They were a highly civilized people and by their position had been driven to become seafarers. They had developed a mercantile marine with two fleets: the Great Sea (Mediterranean) fleet went forth on voyages of discovery and trade from the ports of Tyre and Sidon and sailed as far as Sicily, Spain, North Africa, and even Cornwall; the second, or Red Sea fleet, had its base at Eziongeber and plied the coast of Arabia, and brought home treasures from India. These Phœnicians were skilled in metal and bronze work. Alphabetic writing with a pen on parchment was also customary amongst them.

These prosperous people had been friendly to David, and Solomon found them ready, and even anxious, to enter into commercial relations. South of Carmel, the coast as far as Joppa (the modern Jaffa) belonged to Solomon's kingdom; Joppa was the only possible harbour. Further south the coastal plain was in the hands of the Philistines, but years of struggle had ended in their submission to David, and their power was no longer a menace. Yet farther south lay Egypt; she too had passed the zenith of her power, and the reigning Pharaoh was found willing to give his daughter to Solomon for a wife.

On the east of Jordan, Syria had actually brought tribute to David and both Moab and Edom acknowledged him as their overlord. This overlordship was especially important, as it gave the Hebrews control over the ports on the Red Sea which were in Edomite territory. Solomon was able to rebuild the port of Elath and make it an emporium for trade with the East, in conjunction with Hiram of Tyre and the Phœnician navy. Eziongeber was also an important base for the combined mercantile marine, but, in spite of the example of the Phœnicians, the Hebrews never loved the sea.

Solomon's Reign.

Solomon could not realize his ambitions so long as Jerusalem remained isolated from the world; he, therefore, planned alliances with the surrounding nations, in order to secure both their wares and their skilled workmen.

The most important commercial alliance was the treaty with Hiram. By this it was agreed that he should supply skilled artisans, workers in brass and designers in silver and gold; cedar and fir wood from the forests of Lebanon, and skilled timber workers to superintend the felling of the trees.

The timber was brought down from the Lebanon mountains to the coast, and then made into rafts and floated down to Joppa, where it was unshipped and brought up to Jerusalem. In exchange Solomon undertook to supply Hiram with wheat and oil, probably also spices, honey, nuts, and almonds. When we try to picture the conveyance of the timber without any of our modern means of transport, we realize how many men must have been employed felling, carrying, loading, and unloading, before the trees were ready for use in Jerusalem. The most laborious work of all was given to slave gangs of the original inhabitants of Canaan; but a levy of 30,000 men was raised out of all Israel to do four months' forced labour in the Lebanon forests out of every year, and larger numbers were compelled to work in the stone quarries (1 Kings v. 13).

Once every three years the king's fleet returned to the Red Sea ports, bringing unheard-of treasures from the East. Then the streets of Jerusalem were flooded with foreigners—Phœnician adventurers, merchants, craftsmen, African slaves bearing ivory tusks, others leading apes on chains, or carrying peacocks in cages. In the extravagant description of this "Golden Age," silver appeared to be as common as stone, and rich cedar wood was more often seen than the ordinary native sycamore. The descriptions of the Temple and the royal palaces show the wonder, art, and plenteousness of this stirring time.

THE COURT.

To cement the alliances with the surrounding nations, Solomon took foreign princesses for his wives. His wealth enabled him to secure Pharaoh's daughter, who brought a city as her dowry; no wonder she required an extra palace for herself. These marriages stimulated foreign trade; droves of horses were imported from Egypt, and the revenue benefited by the customs; but the large harem had grave drawbacks.

It meant the introduction of heathen ideas of God into Jerusalem. As at this time each nation, including Israel, believed in national gods and worshipped their own god, it followed that if Israel allied with another nation, she was also uniting with the god of that nation. For instance, the ladies of Ammon demanded the erection of an altar to their god "Milcom," those of Moab required another to their god "Chemosh," and so forth. While we cannot fail to respect the loyalty of these foreign princesses to their national gods, we recognize the evil of a number of heathen altars, heathen forms of worship, and lower codes of morals flooding Jerusalem.

Solomon's policy entailed enormous expense. Court officials were multiplied and the whole country, excepting Judah, was requisitioned to supply victuals for the Court. The menu was noised abroad and doubtless exaggerated; but the fact remained that these foreign ladies were living on dainties, while free-born Israelites

were ministering to their fancies and watching them drink from golden cups.

The King.

Solomon appears to have been a striking personality, capable of rising to great heights. The description of his dream and his request for "an understanding heart" revealed a noble purpose. But the wisdom of Solomon, that made his name famous abroad and brought the Queen of Sheba from Arabia, was of a different kind. This was a quick and ready wit, an aptitude to make an acute judgment, and a knack of inventing pithy proverbs on the spur of the moment. It was this skill that made the king attractive and added to the social entertainment of the Court, so much so that even the Queen of Sheba found her expectations fulfilled and exceeded.

It remains for us to consider this reign from the point of view of an Israelite and of a prophet, and thus to trace the causes which led to revolution and the final break between north and south.

The Israelite Standpoint.

The Israelites had never been very closely bound to their southern brethren in Judah. They were only united during the three reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon. Under Saul they were held together by the mutual effort to resist the common enemy, the Philistines.

Notwithstanding David's popularity there was discontent and jealous rivalry even in his kingdom, which was tragically shown by the revolt of Absalom against his father. David belonged to the tribe of Judah and was, therefore, a southerner; moreover, he had made Jerusalem in the south both his political and religious capital. There it was that Solomon had built the Temple and kept his Court.

The Israelites felt that they had lost much of their old independence, and what had they gained? Solomon acted as a despotic monarch. He demanded forced labour and the payment of heavy taxes for the upkeep

of his southern capital. These grievances were embittered by the extravagance and waste of the Court; discontent was rife, especially among the Israelites who worked for Solomon in Jerusalem. Such a one was Jeroboam, a foreman of building works over the men of Ephraim and Manasseh. His mind was seething with discontent and he was only waiting for an opportunity to lift up his hand against the king.

The Prophetic Standpoint.

Imagine how the presence of heathen altars in Jerusalem would strike a prophet. Some persons might argue that, if everyone believed in the gods of the nations, what harm was it for their altars to stand in Jerusalem? But the prophet would ask, Was it true to Israel's high calling? Were these heathen altars not a dishonour to the God of Israel and a subtle allurement to idolatry? Let Milcom and Chemosh be honoured in Ammon and Moab, but not in Jerusalem!

Thoughts such as these filled Ahijah the prophet, who was burning with indignation over the evidence of idolatrous worship. He was entirely convinced that Solomon was false to his trust and was leading the people away from God.

Apparently, by chance, Ahijah and Jeroboam met one day. In a flash of intuition, the prophet recognized in Jeroboam the man whom God had chosen to work out His will. In dramatic Eastern fashion, the prophet tore his cloak and gave Jeroboam ten out of the twelve pieces, telling him that God had appointed him king over ten tribes; but that Solomon's son should retain one tribe and remain king in Jerusalem. Thus Jeroboam was confirmed in his ambitions and fully determined to realize them. His chance did not come immediately. Solomon suspected him of disloyalty and he was consequently compelled to flee into Egypt, where he remained till news reached him of the king's death.

THE SPLIT BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH.

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam hastened to Shechem in Israel, hoping to win the people's loyalty. But Jeroboam heard the tidings and returned from Egypt to face the new king as a popular leader. The moment was tense. Rehoboam was given one last chance to keep his position. A deputation presented him with a petition: "Thy father made our yoke grievous, now, therefore, make thou the grievous service of thy father, and the heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter and we will serve thee." The king asked for three days' grace, during which time he took counsel with experienced men. They advised him wisely, showing a real knowledge of human nature. "If," they said, "thou wilt be a servant unto this people . . . then they will be thy servants for ever." But this did not please the young king, who had been reared in Solomon's Court to believe in domination rather than service. He, therefore, called for his own companions, whose advice he expected would tally with his own inclinations. They urged him to assert his authority and stand no nonsense. "My father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions"; such was the answer given to the waiting people. Despot he might choose to be, but it should not be over them. They immediately expressed their independence and cried: "What portion have we in David? . . . to your tents, O Israel."

Rehoboam had lost his chance, there was now nothing left but to flee ignominiously in his chariot to Jerusalem. There he gathered together his loyal subjects with the idea of making an attack to regain the lost part of the kingdom. But in the midst of the assembly, the prophet Shemaiah stepped forth and startled everyone with these words: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel."

Probably Rehoboam regarded the prophet's words as an ill omen and feared an even greater disaster. Certain it is that the meeting broke up and the division of the

kingdom was an accomplished fact. From henceforth the ten tribes and part of the tribe of Benjamin formed the kingdom of Israel; the tribe of Judah and the southern part of Benjamin formed the kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem itself was partly in the territory of Benjamin. Only those Benjamites who lived in Jerusalem and the immediate neighbourhood remained loyal to the house of David, the greater number revolted to Jeroboam the Ephraimite; this was natural, because Benjamin represented the party of Saul, whose house had been superseded by David. Tribal loyalty and rivalry were very keen and more deep rooted than the sense of national unity.

The division of the tribe of Benjamin between the northern and southern kingdoms is not explained in the Bible story and leads to confusion; sometimes the southern kingdom is referred to as "two" and in other places as "one" tribe only. Like all Biblical writers our author was concerned with the interpretation of events, rather than with the explanation of practical details, which were well known in his time.

Our purpose now will be to study those prophets who delivered their message in the kingdom of Israel until it came to a tragic end.

CHAPTER VIII

ISRAEL AMONG THE NATIONS

ISRAEL suffered great losses by her separation from Judah. The Ark and the Temple were on Mount Zion, now in a foreign land, from henceforward no longer forming a bond of union between all the tribes, but rather objects of envy.

The traditional sanctity of the kingly office was also lost to Israel, when she broke away from the house of David and accepted an adventurer like Jeroboam as her king.

There was no longer any reason for remaining loyal to one king rather than another. Therefore, whenever the people were exasperated with a king, they had no scruple in getting rid of him and setting up someone else in his place. This meant constant revolution and continual uncertainty.

The northern kingdom possessed the richest land, including the open plain of Esdraelon. The country was mostly hilly, yet the slopes were fertile and the inhabitants were small-holders of vineyards and orchards, who were beginning to pride themselves on their possessions. The governing class were a military aristocracy with the king as their captain.

The geographical position of Israel made it impossible for her to live in isolation from the world of her day; on the contrary, she was jostled among the nations. This tiny country was a high-road between the great empires of the Nile and the Tigris-Euphrates valleys. The desert could not be crossed by armies. One route from Egypt followed along the Maritime Plain, avoiding Judah but crossing Esdraelon to the rich cities of Phœnicia, or in a north-easterly direction to Damascus. Another route across Esdraelon ran down the Valley of Jezreel, and over the shallow fords of the

Jordan into the land of Gilead, from thence either northwards to Damascus or south-east to the high plateau of Moab. Merchant caravans and war chariots crossed Israel and brought her into contact with the life of other peoples. Yet the Israelites felt a keen sense of separation, for each nation was divided from every other nation by the belief in many gods. To the Israelites He was Yahweh, to the Syrians Rimmon, to the Moabites Chemosh, to the Phœnicians Baal.

It will be our purpose to show what were Israel's relations with her nearest neighbours, and from incidental allusions to form some idea of what the ordinary people in these countries thought of their gods.

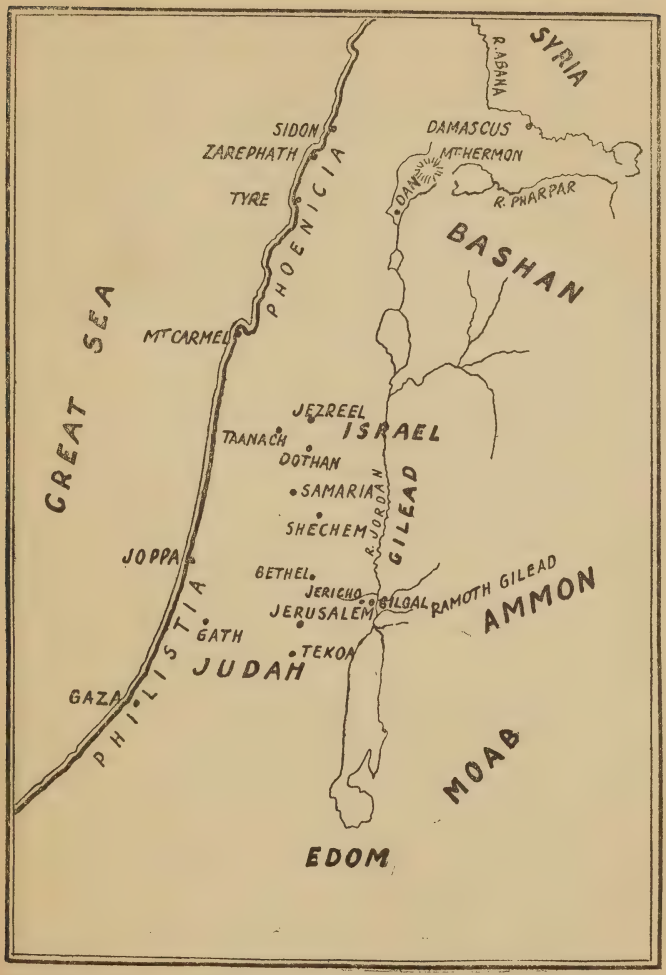
Israel and Judah.

Israel lay open on the south. It was very easy to come up the valleys into the hill country. Israel coveted the riches of Jerusalem, whilst Judah envied the fertile valleys of the northern kingdom. This mutual jealousy was increased by tribal rivalry, and resulted in an almost continuous border warfare, weakening to both sides. The debatable ground between the two kingdoms was fortified; when one stronghold was built by Israel, another facing it would immediately be built by Judah, and *vice versa*.

Jeroboam I. wanted Israel to be independent of Judah; he rebuilt Shechem, the ancient centre, and made it his capital; he then planned for two of the high places, Dan in the north and Bethel in the south, to be used as special centres for worship and places of pilgrimage (1 Kings xii.).

Dan was already honoured as an ancient sanctuary, where Yahweh had long been worshipped with the correct ritual. There was an old story of its foundation by the tribe of Danites, who, anxious to be loyal worshippers of Yahweh, had once stolen a Levite to act as their priest (Judg. xviii.).

Bethel was situated in Benjamin near the northern border, and was a likely spot to attract pilgrims *en route* to Jerusalem. This sanctuary had also been rever-



This map illustrates the position of Israel after her separation from Judah and shows that close contact with the surrounding peoples became inevitable. It is especially helpful to a right understanding of the work and message of Elijah, Elisha and Amos.

enced in patriarchal times; because there it was that Jacob had seen the vision of angels, ascending and descending, upon the heavenly ladder. To mark the spot, he had anointed his stone pillow with oil, set it up as a sacred pillar, and changed the name of the place to Bethel, "the House of God." This stone was still standing.

In these two high places of Dan and Bethel, Jeroboam set up golden calves. Now a bull was a symbol of strength. Clay statuettes of the divine bull have been excavated in the Canaanitish high places. A living bull was worshipped in Egypt. Winged bulls adorned the Assyrian palaces; these were symbolical representations suggestive of more than animal strength.

Jeroboam had probably seen images of the sacred bull in Israel, he had also lived in Egypt and was influenced by what he had known there. It appears certain that, though he used an heathen form of representation, he meant the bull calves to be symbols of Yahweh's strength. When they were erected, he called to the people, saying: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings xii. 28). Clearly he did not mean to imply, "these bull calves brought you up," but rather the power of Yahweh which was typified by them. He no doubt believed that the people must have some visible, outward signs of God's presence amongst them. Since they had lost the Temple and the sacred Ark, why should they not have these images in their stead? Their popularity showed that the prevailing ideas of God were still very crude: some worshippers might rise to a more spiritual thought of God, but the masses conceived of Him in the form of a golden calf, as had been graphically illustrated in the story of Aaron's day.

The house of Jeroboam lasted about fifty years; then Omri, a captain in the army, seized the throne in 881 B.C. He was a strong man and made Israel famous outside her borders; so that she became known on Assyrian inscriptions as "Omriland."

During Omri's dynasty, Israel and Judah were allied,

but as this came only from hatred and dread of a common enemy, it did not last after the immediate danger was past. Omri moved his capital city from Shechem, which was situated in a narrow valley and not capable of defence, to the isolated hill-top of Samaria; just because this position was easy to defend, Samaria suffered many long sieges in the course of its history. Here he built a royal palace, the site of which, 160 ft. square, has lately been discovered.

Israel and Syria.

Syria lay on the north-east, between Israel and the desert. The Syrians, once a wandering people like the Israelites, had settled in the narrow, fertile valley of a great river. The river Abana rises in the Lebanons, flows through a narrow gorge, and suddenly bursts out upon a plain where it divides into many streams. These water the valley, making the wilderness to blossom as a rose, until they finally lose themselves in the desert. Nature is very bountiful in this rich valley. The eye of the traveller coming from the desert would suddenly light upon groves of oranges and lemons, vines and olives, and all manner of loveliness, attractive to the eye and luscious to the taste. In the midst of this garden was Damascus, a white-roofed city glittering in the sunlight.

The military empire of Assyria lay on high ground in the upper reaches of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley and wanted an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea, but just at this period Assyria was not powerful enough to expand westward, and Syria was therefore free to develop without fear of attack. Hence her capital was prosperous and full of life.

Though the immediate neighbourhood of Damascus was richly fertile, Syria lacked space for extension, because cultivation of the desert was impossible. The Syrians were traders by nature; their open-air bazaar shops were noted for the beauty and variety of their wares, supplied by richly laden caravans from far countries. Syrian merchants naturally looked west-

ward towards the sea and wanted to join hands with Phœnician traders.

We can imagine caravans of camels bound for the coast, and understand the dreams of young Syrians who longed to sail elsewhere to barter their treasures. Doubtless there were others in Damascus who looked for an outlet to the hill country of Gilead on the south and coveted the flocks and herds of these villagers; yet others, perhaps, hearing tales of the fruitful valleys beyond Jordan, and the new cities beginning to grow rich, hungered for a share in these possessions.

Omri of Israel recognized the growing power and ambitions of Syria and tried to strike a blow at her, but he was badly defeated and compelled to surrender Israelite cities, among them Ramoth Gilead on the east of Jordan and to grant the Syrian king the right to set up a bazaar of shops in Samaria (1 Kings xx. 34).

After this success the Syrians made yearly raids into Israel and carried off all they could get of treasure, sheep, and slaves. They came in chariots, these were driven across Gilead and down to the deep Jordan Valley: they would then be floated across the river on inflated skins, driven up the broad valley to Jezreel, and onward to Samaria. Such a raid took place in Elisha's day, when the Syrian captain Naaman carried away an Israelite girl to be a household slave to his wife (2 Kings v.). Imagine what these raids must have meant to the inhabitants of those villages, who lived in constant fear of surprise attacks from such marauding bands as these!

On one of the occasions in Ahab's reign (1 Kings xx.), Benhadad II. of Syria surrounded Samaria confident of a speedy conquest. He sent an impudent message to Ahab demanding the instant surrender of treasure and slaves: "Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine." Ahab, no doubt afraid of a long siege, answered submissively: "It is according to thy saying, my lord, O king; I am thine, and all that I have." Whereupon Benhadad demanded the further right to

send his servants to search the royal palace and city, and seize anything and everything they wanted. This was going too far. Ahab refused to bear this indignity, and Benhadad angrily boasted that he would reduce the city to dust. Stung by the taunt, Ahab plucked up courage and sent a fitting reply: "Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself as he that taketh it off."

Certain of their superior strength, Benhadad and his princes indulged in drink and revelry, heedless of danger and utterly scornful of their foes. Meanwhile Ahab was advised, by an unknown prophet, to make an attack; the Syrians were caught off their guard and thoroughly defeated and pursued.

This prophet, knowing their ways, wisely warned Ahab to expect a raid in the following year. Rumour among the Syrians reported that they had been defeated because they had fought among the hills where Israel's God was all-powerful, but if they were now to meet the Israelites in the valleys they would undoubtedly succeed.

Yet again an unknown Israelite prophet took up the challenge and used it as an opportunity to proclaim Yahweh of Israel as the sole Lord of Canaan.

Thus the men of Israel went out to battle full of religious enthusiasm and determined to prove their God's power. The Syrians were disastrously defeated with heavy losses, and Benhadad only narrowly escaped. He was in hiding and fearful of his life, when his servants devised a scheme. They girded themselves in sackcloth with ropes round their necks, like the six men of Calais in later days, and stood before Ahab to plead for their king's life, saying: "Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee let me live." Whether Benhadad himself was one of those thus disguised or in hiding close at hand is not clear.

Ahab, pleased at his enemy's humiliation and hoping to gain some advantage out of it, sent for Benhadad and granted him his life on condition that he restored the Israelitish cities taken by his father from Omri, and provided trading facilities to Israelites in the bazaars

of Damascus as compensation for the Syrian bazaar in Samaria.

Rimmon of Syria.

Naaman, the Syrian captain, returned to Israel in peace to seek a cure for his leprosy from the prophet Elisha. After his cure, he wanted to continue giving thanks to the God of Israel and wondered how this could be done in Damascus. He consulted with Elisha. Could the LORD of Israel hear prayer offered in a strange land over which He did not rule? To meet the difficulty Naaman besought Elisha for "two mules' burden of earth," that he might be able to spread it out in his garden at home, and thus kneel upon Yahweh's own land while he worshipped Him. Then he felt certain that Yahweh of Israel would be able to hear his thanks. To show genuine gratitude, he promised never to offer "burnt offerings" to Rimmon, since Yahweh had proved Himself a living God. Yet he hoped he might still be allowed to go into the House of Rimmon! Naaman "was a great man with his master" the king, and was accustomed to go in his escort to worship in Rimmon's temple. To refuse this honour, or to slight Rimmon by not "bowing the knee" before him, might cost the captain his rank! Surely, he thought, the LORD would pardon this compromise. Elisha granted his request and answered: "Go in peace" (2 Kings v.).

Israel and Moab.

The land of Moab was a high plateau on the south-east of Canaan.

Omri was covetous of the wealth of Mesha, King of Moab, who was rich in sheep. He invaded his country and secured a heavy tribute of wool. This Mesha continued to pay throughout the reign of Ahab; but on his death he seized the opportunity to rebel, hoping thereby to free his country from the enormous wool subsidy.

The forces were strong against Moab; Israel secured the help of Judah and Edom, who both feared the power of Mesha. The allied armies nearly perished through

lack of water, but Elisha saved the situation. He counselled the kings to order that trenches should be dug, and then let all the army wait with patience till the morning for God's gift of water to man and beast. In the night rain fell on the mountains and raised the ground water level so that the trenches were filled. The rising sun was seen by the Moabites reflected in the standing water and looked to them like blood. They instantly thought that the kings had been fighting one another, and rushed forward; "Moab to the spoil," they cried. But they were mistaken, and in the resulting confusion the allies gained the advantage over them.

Routed and pursued, Mesha took a desperate step to avert disaster and save his country. Publicly, in view of the hosts of friends and enemies, he took his eldest son and offered him as a human sacrifice upon the wall. The invading armies were filled with superstitious dread, and instantly thought that the God of Moab would be propitiated by the king's sacrifice and fight for the Moabites. The report spread like wildfire among their ranks; they therefore turned and fled, and the Moabites won a great victory (2 Kings iii. 4-27).

Mesha set up a stone to celebrate this success. It is known as the "Moabite Stone," and can be seen in the Louvre at Paris. On it the king gave his own testimony as follows: "I am Mesha, King of Moab. Omri, King of Israel, oppressed Moab many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land. His son (*i.e.*, Ahab) succeeded him and he also said, 'I will oppress Moab,' but I saw my desire upon him and his house and Israel perished for ever." The rest of his inscription goes into details concerning the Moabite victories and never fails to give all the thanks and praise to Chemosh.

Thus we have two accounts—the Israelitish and the Moabitish—and can understand each better with the help of the other. Mesha himself recorded that the name of Moab's god was Chemosh, and attributed victory or defeat in battle entirely to the favour or anger of Chemosh. According to Mesha's idea, the cause of Omri's victories was not his military skill, but the anger

of Chemosh against his own people. Naturally, therefore, the next time the Moabites knew a battle was going against them, they were certain that Chemosh must again be angry and considered what could be done to appease him.

Herein lies the explanation of the story in Kings. The Israelites, Moab believed, were defeated and put to flight because the anger of Chemosh was appeased by the sacrifice of the king's eldest son and heir.

Although the idea of a human sacrifice is revolting to Christians, yet there was something splendid in Mesha's act. To him Chemosh and Moab came first, however much the sacrifice cost him.

Israel and Phœnicia.

We have heard of the Phœnician workmen, cities, and mercantile marine in Solomon's reign. All this busy commercial life was only just over twenty miles away from the quiet homesteads of the Israelite husbandmen. The sea was visible from Samaria, and it might even be possible to see the galleys as tiny dots going to and fro from the harbours of Tyre and Sidon.

Omri's Policy.

Omri wanted to pursue the policy of Solomon and establish close relations with Tyre; he desired the riches and wares, the modern commercial life, city development, and the up-to-date civilization of the Phœnicians. He therefore allowed a marriage between his son Ahab and Jezebel the Phœnician princess (1 Kings xvi. 31). Jezebel's father Ethbaal was both high priest and king of Tyre and Sidon, and thus wielded all power in church and state.

The Tyrian Baal.

The same word "Baal," in use among the Canaanites, was taken by the Phœnicians as a title for their own national divinity, in whose honour beautiful temples were built and elaborate worship was offered. The forms and ceremonies connected with this worship

were practically identical with those of Canaanite Baal worship.

In consequence of his marriage with Jezebel, Ahab had to allow his wife to bring her retinue from Tyre, including priests and prophets; further, he built a royal chapel and set up an altar to Baal in Samaria. The public worship of this Tyrian Baal by the queen and her court was thus established by royal consent, even as the worship of other foreign divinities had been permitted in Jerusalem on account of Solomon's wives.

This truly was a dishonour to Yahweh of Israel, yet there was no real danger of king and people forsaking Yahweh for a foreign god. Ahab was not an apostate, he named his children after Israel's God—Aha*ziah*, Athal*iah*—and appointed Obadiah, who was a loyal Yahweh worshipper, over his household.

THE CANAANITE BAAL.

As we have noted from the time of the Israelite occupation of Palestine, worshippers of Yahweh and of Baal lived side by side, which had naturally resulted in an intermingling of Canaanite ideas and practices with the simple desert faith. "Is Yahweh all sufficient for His people?" "Is He the LORD both of the hills and the agricultural land?" These old questions remained still incompletely answered by the masses, including some priests and prophets. Many of these, though professing allegiance to the national God, Yahweh, thought of Him in the same terms as the Tyrians thought of Baal or the Moabites of Chemosh, and used similar methods of approach. Jezebel favoured these priests and prophets and invited them to meals at the Court; they "ate at Jezebel's table." Naturally this strengthened their position, and heathen practices became increasingly widespread and fashionable.

There were prophetic bands, similar to those in Samuel's time, who knew no compromise with Baal worship, but they were not brave enough to make an open protest. Jezebel did not like even silent opposition, and Obadiah, fearful for their lives, hid them in

caves, secretly taking them food, probably under cover of dusk. Hidden in dark recesses these prophets were safe from incurring the queen's wrath, but they failed to witness to the truth. While they remained silent the religion of Yahweh was fast becoming like that of Baal.

The question of the moment was a burning one: "Will the unique revelation given to Israel be lost or no?" How momentous the crisis was no one living then could have known or foreseen; the awful gravity of the moment was all the greater because unrealized. No one cared to think. The whole nation was drifting, drifting down the path of least resistance. But God left not Himself without witness. Out of all Israel arose one mighty man ready to fight alone against a multitude

CHAPTER IX

ELIJAH

BIBLE PASSAGES :

Elijah before Ahab (1 Kings xvii. 1).
Elijah at the brook Cherith (1 Kings xvii. 2-7).
Elijah with the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings xvii. 8 to end).
Elijah summons all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 1-20).
Elijah and the Baal Worshippers (1 Kings xviii. 20 to end).
Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kings xix. 1-18).
Elijah calls Elisha (1 Kings xix. 19 to end).
Elijah rebukes Ahab in Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings xxi).
Elijah's last farewell (2 Kings ii. 1-12).

PART I.—MOUNT CARMEL

ELIJAH IN GILEAD.

Elijah's home was the hill country of Gilead on the east of Jordan. We can picture him among his hills. He was a lover of the free highland life. Clad with a rough skin flung round his shoulders, tanned by the sun, with strong weather-beaten features and great tawny, muscular limbs, he was once described as "an hairy man with a girdle about his loins." He must have had keen eyes, quick to observe the coming storm and often lit up by a fierce glint, with all his senses on the alert, ever ready to wrestle with lion or bear, or to meet any other emergency that might arise. He hated the cities of his day, and their attractions made no appeal to him.

Elijah was a man of burning faith in the God revealed to Moses in the desert of Sinai. This Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, Who had saved His people from slavery in Egypt and given them the Promised Land, was Lord over the Chosen People and their land. He gave strength to His servants to overcome the wild beasts. He watered the thirsty land and made it fruitful. To Elijah there was no other Power in Israel to

whom the people might turn, no other Lord over Israel, who could protect the land and make it to prosper.

Elijah was also a man of silent prayer. A messenger must needs hear the message before he can pass it on. The exact translation from the Hebrew of the words which our Bible renders "the LORD said," would be "the Whisper of the LORD." On some unknown hill-top this whisper had been heard by that ready listener. Elijah knew that the people of Israel were unfaithful in their allegiance to Yahweh, and felt himself to be God's chosen messenger to bring them back to whole-hearted loyalty.

Elijah's Journey to Samaria.

No sooner did the call come than away he went. Most probably it was autumn, when the October rains would be expected. These are called in the Bible "the former rains," because they broke up the summer drought and so prepared the ground for ploughing, but they had not yet begun. We may picture Elijah rushing down the hill-slopes into the burning valley of the Jordan, fording its waters up to his girdle, striding along the Valley of Jezreel, on to the hill of Samaria, up to the top and through the gates, until, ignoring all ceremony, he entered unannounced into the presence of the king and queen. All the while the message had been growing clearer in his mind. He felt increasingly certain that the October rains would not come, the winter rains would not come, the beautiful spring verdure would never clothe the hills; surely, though slowly, vines, olives, orchards, all would wither and die. For the LORD must speak, must make His people know that He and He only was God in Israel, the One of whom it is written that "He sendeth rain from heaven and fruitful seasons."

Elijah before Ahab.

Thus did Elijah startle the Court with this announcement: "As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to My word."

ELIJAH DURING THE FAMINE.

The stories of God's care of Elijah were beautifully told by disciples who venerated their master and loved to repeat the wonderful tales of his preservation.

Elijah, at God's word, went to dwell by the brook Cherith and "the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning . . . and in the evening, and he drank of the brook." There he remained until "the brook dried up," and, again at God's command, he journeyed to Zarephath in Phœnicia.

The story of Elijah with the widow was more especially precious, because it proved that Yahweh's protecting care was still over His prophet, in a strange land, and was even extended to the servant of an alien God.

It is difficult to realize what actual famine meant; not only no food in the house, but none in the fields or gardens, the shops or market-place. Yet this was the wellnigh desperate condition when this Phœnician widow went out to gather sticks to make a cake with her last handful of meal and drain of oil. Imagine what the meeting with Elijah meant to her! A stranger not only asked her for a drink but for a morsel of bread, and made her the astounding promise in the name of a foreign God: "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth."

What faith it needed to trust the words and promise of this foreigner! Must she not have questioned? Was the speaker merely a hungry man wanting food? or was he a prophet of Israel's God and really able to give her relief? Trusting in him she divided her last meal into three portions, and, though hungry and her son, a growing lad, yet hungrier, they took the mysterious stranger to live in their simple home. Her faith was rewarded and their lives were saved from starvation; yet afterwards, while Elijah was still with them, the boy fell sick and died. She felt bewildered. Was her guest to be feared as a bringer of judgment? Yet when the boy was restored she must have been even more per-

plexed; one thing alone was manifest, this man must be "a man of God."

The Old Outlook and the New!

Elijah's disciples, who treasured these stories, found no difficulty in accepting marvels, such as they narrated about the birds and the widow's cruse. We need to understand their way of thinking. So long as men believed in national gods, each god was limited in his sphere of action to his own people. He could, therefore, have no universal control, but gave orders for the protection of his own or the overthrow of his enemies. Thus Yahweh was believed to have ordered a bog to swallow Pharaoh's chariots, a flood to drown the Canaanite forces on the banks of the Kishon, a famine to show His power in Elijah's day, a storm in answer to the prophet's prayer. Why should He not command ravens to feed His prophet and oil and meal to replenish the widow's store? In truth, it was in "wonder" tales such as these latter that God's power was more especially recognized, for the more unusual the occurrence, the greater proof it provided of His direct intervention on behalf of His people.

Our mental environment has completely changed owing to the widening of our horizon. God has now been revealed as the one Lord of an infinite universe, in which the earth itself is only a tiny speck. We no longer conceive of God as controlling a small area and giving isolated orders to meet special occasions, but rather as the Creative Mind, controlling the universe and manifested in Nature.

Christ, by revealing the one God as "our Father," taught us increasingly to realize His love for individuals and called upon all members of the one family to co-operate with the Father in His care for the welfare of all mankind.

This is not the place to discuss the possibility of "miracles" in general, yet to accept these stories as the exact report of the actual occurrences is frankly against our reason and experience. Nevertheless, they contain

the eternal truth that "every good and perfect gift cometh from above," whatever be the means used by the one Father to bring it into the barrel or cruse.

The contrast between the two modes of thinking is also seen in the ancient and modern attitude towards the famine itself. To the man of Elijah's day the famine was an evil sent as a punishment by God; to the modern Christian it is an indication that irrigation of desert and reclamation of waste lands are our present duty and in accordance with the purpose of God, that mankind may be spared from the recurrence of famine.

ELIJAH SUMMONS ALL ISRAEL TO MOUNT CARMEL.

"The famine was sore in Samaria." Menander, a Greek writer, tells us that the drought lasted a whole year in Phœnicia, during the reign of Ethbaal, Jezebel's father. Possibly it lasted longer in Israel; we do not know for certain.

Ahab was in great straits; his plans to find Elijah had all failed. Ahab hated him, yet he was haunted by his words. Must he accept Elijah's interpretation of the famine against his will? Droughts were not unknown; day after day the heavens were as brass, the sun shone pitilessly on the parched ground; yet Ahab grew increasingly certain that the failure of rain at this time was connected in some strange way with the unknown prophet. Where was he? Was there truth in his mysterious utterance? Could there be a hidden purpose in this frightful thirst of man and beast? Was it meant to show that Yahweh alone controlled the rain and fertilized the land? Such questionings filled men's minds. The hart was actually panting for the water brooks, panting and dropping exhausted, so were the men, the women, and the children. Was it also true that their souls were athirst, though unconsciously, for God, even for the Living God? That there were some such thirsty ones we shall presently find, though they had not the courage to appear openly. What a contrast these were to Elijah, who not only deliberately showed himself to Ahab, but commanded in a tone of authority: "Now

therefore send and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel."

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal.

Mount Carmel, the scene of this dramatic contest, was a high ridge standing out into the sea and visible from the hills all over Israel. In normal years its sides were richly cultivated with vine and olive; this year all was brown, dried up, and withered. Nature was dying. Death stared the people in the face. All depended on the issue of that day. Imagine the different groups struggling up the hill, weak and weary though they were, and gradually forming a great multitude! Among them there were Ahab and Jezebel with the Court retinue, Baal's priests and prophets, also the priests of the high places from all over Israel, already, alas! under the influence of Jezebel. Among the crowd, doubtless, were also merchants and townsmen, husbandmen and shepherds. Were Obadiah and the LORD'S prophets from the caves there too? We do not know. When all were assembled, Elijah drew near and uttered his challenge: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." Mendelssohn's oratorio of "Elijah" has helped many to appreciate the grandeur of the scene. The choruses of the Baal prophets, "O Baal, hear us," "Hear and answer us," grew ever louder and louder, as Elijah mocked, and the day wore on.

Elijah's Prayer and the Answer.

When Elijah's altar of twelve stones was raised and the sacrifice prepared, there came a moment of intense expectancy. Strange stillness is often felt in nature before a heavy storm breaks. The hubbub of a crowd subsides when the crisis is near. Deep silence falls upon a body of earnest worshippers waiting upon God. Thus Elijah prayed: "O LORD, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou

art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant. . . ." The Baal prophets had prayed, but there was no answer. Elijah had cried in derision, "Peradventure he (Baal) sleepeth," but as the Psalmist says: "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. cxxi. 4).

God had been working all the time. All the laws which govern nature were His laws, but the people had been spiritually blind, and had not perceived His working. Elijah was His true servant, therefore he, and he alone, had been able to see and understand the meaning of God's over-ruling.

God was now about to give another sign, but this time the people's eyes were straining to see what it might be, their ears were listening for the message, their minds were ready to receive and therefore able to understand it. They felt that a moment of crisis was upon them.

Their appeals had met with no response. Would Elijah be heard or no?

Through the solemn silence of the waiting multitude a strong, clear voice was ringing. "O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou, LORD, art God." Suddenly a flash of brilliant lightning lit the sky and struck the altar. That flash at once blinded the people's eyes by its brilliancy and opened their eyes by its message. The words of a blind man cured by Jesus come to mind: "Whereas I was blind, now I see" (John ix. 25). One and all knew that this lightning was the "fire of the LORD." Here was the answer to their unspoken question and they cried in thanksgiving: "The LORD He is God, the LORD He is God."

Thus shouted this great multitude, while Elijah, in the moment of triumph, ordered a wholesale massacre of the Baal prophets in these words: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. . . . Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." Such a slaughter caused no amazement or censure, for it was in accordance with the rough spirit of the age; even an Elijah believed that Yahweh

approved of this cruel retaliation. After this Elijah went up to the top of Carmel and prayed until his servant discerned the cloud, as "small as a man's hand" come up over the sea, and after a little while, "the heaven grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain."

A victory had been won that day. Never again was it questioned whether Yahweh should be worshipped with the rites of Baal, for He had been proved to be the one LORD and Giver of fertility to the land of Israel.

PART II.—MOUNT HOREB

JEZEBEL SOUGHT ELIJAH'S LIFE.

Jezebel, after her humiliation on Carmel, sought to slay Elijah because she feared his power and was enraged at the massacre of the prophets. Elijah fled with his servant to Beersheba, the sanctuary and place of pilgrimage in the south of Judah, and from thence, alone, into the desert. Worn out with conflict he flung himself down under a juniper-tree, where he was unexpectedly strengthened with food and sympathy by an angel friend.

"And he looked, and, behold, there was at his head a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water . . . and the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee."

From thence he journeyed to Horeb, the sacred mountain, and ascended to its heights to pass a forty days' vigil in fasting and solitude. Had he not striven to inspire Israel with a purer faith in Yahweh and to recall her prophets, priests, and people to a keener sense of loyalty to the Covenant? Was this to be the end of it all? "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

He had come to the lone mountain, this most sacred region where Yahweh had been revealed to Moses and the Covenant inaugurated, in order to seek for further

manifestation of the Divine Presence. When standing near the spot where Moses had waited to see the glory of the LORD pass by (Exod. xxxiii. 21, 22), Elijah also had a remarkable experience: "And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still, small voice." No message came to this lonely prophet through wind, earthquake, or fire. This time God spoke through the "still, small voice"; "a sound of gentle stillness" gave him courage and inspiration. The word came to him and to him alone, in accents clear yet still, unmistakeable yet mysterious; truly an earnest of that Holy Spirit of whom it was promised, "He abideth with you and shall be in you."

Elijah learnt of his great mistake; far from being the only one, there were yet seven thousand in Israel who were wholehearted in their faithfulness to Yahweh; from among these there was one, Elisha, whom God had chosen to be his successor. Elijah went down the mountain to search for him.

ELISHA'S NOMINATION.

When Elijah found him, Elisha was a well-to-do, hard-working farmer's son, ploughing his fields. The two men evidently knew one another, and, when the prophet's mantle was thrown about Elisha's shoulders, he understood the sign thus given. He knew it meant that he was called to leave his work, that he might prepare himself to act as Elijah's successor. He only asked leave to say farewell at home before he made ready to become a disciple. He accepted his call wholeheartedly, and sacrificed his oxen in order to indicate that he knew there could be no turning back. Thus he began a life of devoted service from which he never swerved. Probably this story passed through the mind of Christ when He said: "No man, having put his hand

to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 62).

The Other Tasks.

In calling Elisha from the plough, Elijah was sure that he recognized God's guidance and had, therefore, acted with prompt decision. He was also aware of two other duties, which he believed God to have laid upon him: one was to overthrow the house of Ahab, the other was to deal a blow at Israel's enemy, Syria, by launching a conspiracy against her royal house. These tasks appear to have been present to Elijah's mind; though they cannot have been felt by him to be equally urgent, as he did not proceed to carry them out, but waited to entrust them to Elisha.

Elijah and Naboth's Vineyard.

In the story of Naboth's vineyard there are represented two standards of right and wrong, fighting for the mastery one against the other. The standard of Ahab, a worshipper of Yahweh, was distinctly higher than the standard of Jezebel, a worshipper of the Tyrian Baal. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard and was enraged with him for thwarting his desire to obtain it. Yet Ahab had a sense of justice; he had respect for the law of his God—"Thou shalt not steal." This prompted him to offer Naboth either another vineyard in exchange for his own or compensation for it in money; but he had no sympathy for Naboth's love of his small possession, the cherished heirloom of his family. Jezebel, his heathen queen, on the other hand, thought that to treat a subject with justice showed foolish weakness and lack of power to rule. Therefore she, jeeringly, demanded of her husband, "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?" and then asserted her own superior strength and ability to obtain the coveted possession: "I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth." See here her view of despotic government. To her mind it was simply ridiculous for a king to respect the rights of his subjects. Jezebel acted as she had spoken, and encompassed the

death of Naboth by lying intrigue. Then she came to Ahab saying: "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth . . . for Naboth is not alive, but dead." Her standard was "might is right," which Ahab knew to be evil, but he stifled his better self and went down to the vineyard to take possession of it.

If the matter had ended there, the standard of Jezebel would have won; but it did not. God had directed Elijah to go to this very spot: "Arise, go down to meet Ahab, King of Israel . . . behold he is in the vineyard of Naboth." It was a terrible meeting between the proud king and the gaunt figure of the prophet; a tragic note sounded in Ahab's greeting: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

Again, in the persons of these men, two standards met and were found irreconcilable. Ahab represented the ordinary Israelite of his period, who knew Yahweh's moral demands, yet allowed his ideas and practice to be lowered by contact with the heathen. Elijah proclaimed the stern reality of Israel's obligations as partner in the Covenant with a righteous God.

Elijah knew himself to be the bearer of a Divine message of judgment against the house of Ahab, but the form in which he delivered it was his own: "Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine . . . the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel." Wild dogs would naturally roam the streets and eat the refuse; nevertheless, these words repel us. The language showed that the speaker had not learnt to temper justice with mercy, and had no compassion and no desire for the salvation of the sinner.

This can be even more clearly seen if we contrast Elijah's words with those of Christ, when He was delivering a sentence of judgment: "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on Me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 6). This latter sentence is as severe as the former, but there are striking

differences. In the first the horrible details are gloated over, till we can almost feel in them a thirst for vengeance. In the second the sentence is pronounced with no gruesome detail, and the reason for it is given. What a reason too! "It is profitable for him"—that is, for the wrongdoer. Not God's desire for vengeance, but God's love for the sinner made the sentence necessary. The love of God was seeking to save sinners, not desiring to inflict punishment upon them. In the first instance God's judgment was pronounced as it was understood by Elijah; in the second it was the same Divine judgment as understood and taught by Christ.

PART III.—THE MOUNT OF ASCENSION

Master and Disciples.

As Elisha journeyed up and down the country with his master, he must have learnt more about the work that lay before him. Elijah would, naturally, have spoken about his anxiety to complete the tasks which he believed that God had entrusted to him and which involved the overthrow of the reigning dynasty in Damascus, and of the house of Ahab in Israel. These were difficult indeed! and could only be successfully accomplished when opportunities offered. Both men naturally realized that the time of Elijah's departure was fast approaching, and they therefore thought that Elisha was intended by God to carry out his master's work.

Elisha was by no means the only one who looked to Elijah as his lord. At most of the chief cities in Israel there were settlements of prophets, who were Elijah's special care. We can trace the last farewell journey of Elijah, accompanied by Elisha, through Gilgal and Bethel to Jericho, and farther across the Jordan into the hill country. The prophets at Bethel and Jericho came out to meet Elisha, saying: "Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" Possibly they were glad to show that they could foretell the future. Elisha asked them to hold their peace, for

he himself knew the tidings only too well and was filled with sorrow at the prospect of the near parting.

Let us picture the two, mounting a steep ascent, on the farther side of Jordan. As we watch, the fiery golden sun is sinking in the west, and the clouds are lit up with a deep crimson radiance. A heavy foreboding brooded over them. It was a solemn moment when Elisha, from his full heart, made a last request: "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." Elijah replied: "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." Elisha felt himself unequal to the task about to be laid upon him; yet he trusted and waited for power from on high. Suddenly, a strong wind swept the mountain-side. Elisha's eyes were dimmed. The awful moment had come, and the two were "parted asunder." What parted them? Not a black wall of darkness, but rather a fiery cloud of brightness. As Elisha gazed, we are told, it appeared like to "a chariot of fire and horses of fire." The wind whirled the clouds into the likeness of an ascending way, leading upward to the gates of Paradise. Elisha stood amazed. The blaze of light was like a glorious doxology, closing the earth life of one of God's great men.

For all that had been accomplished, for noble courage and faithful witness, to the LORD, the God of Israel be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We cannot help remembering another scene centuries after, when the disciples stood gazing upward into the bright cloud which hid their Lord from them. They, too, had been bidden to wait for power from on high to give them strength for their task. This gift came to them on the day of Pentecost, under the same symbol of fire. In like manner in the Elisha story, the blaze of glory was also the light of illumination. By its aid the hard tasks before Elisha were seen by him in the light of God's power. The golden clouds hid mysteries of which heavenly vision could grant a glimpse; even when faith could not pierce beyond, the certainty remained that the hosts of God were numberless and His resources infinite.

Elisha took up Elijah's mantle with courage, and felt new power within him. Dazed by all he had seen, yet conscious of the awful responsibility of his mission, his resolution and strength grew and developed; and the warmth of his heart was kindled to understanding sympathy with his fellow-men. He cried: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" Did he foresee the ghastly wars coming upon Israel? How could the future be faced now that the leader was gone?

As Elisha walked back alone, the prophets came out from Jericho to meet him, and gave very striking testimony and encouragement; for, with one accord, they recognized a new power was with him, and said one to another: "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha."

The Thought of Elisha.

Elisha believed that the blue sky was a dome and that Elijah drove upwards towards it in the fiery chariot. The Jews of later days expected that he would return in like manner. His body might conceivably have been consumed by a flash of lightning. All that we know is that Elisha was convinced of Elijah's continued life by this vision.

To Elisha the existence of the spirit apart from the body had no reality. The Hebrews accepted the creation story, as found in Genesis ii., quite literally. According to this, God formed the dust of the earth into a figure, even as a potter moulds his clay, He then breathed into the lifeless form "the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). The soul was thus conceived to be identical with the breath of the body.

This same thought is found in the two stories of "Raising from the Dead," connected with the prophets Elijah and Elisha. When the widow of Zarephath's son died, Elijah stretched himself upon the lifeless body three times, and cried: "O LORD my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again . . . and the soul of the child came into him again and he revived"

(1 Kings xvii. 21, 22). Clearly the "soul" here referred to meant the breath.

When Elisha raised the lady of Shunem's son, a similar account is given in greater detail: "And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes" (2 Kings iv. 34, 35). Is not this suggestive of artificial respiration? Thus both prophets are represented as revivifying a lifeless body, not as recalling a living spirit.

A striking parallel is found in Ezekiel's "Vision of the Dry Bones," when God, in addressing the prophet, said: "Prophesy over these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. . . . So I prophesied . . . and the breath came into them, and they lived" (Ezek. xxxvii. 4, 5, 10). Therefore, when Elisha was granted the revelation that Elijah did not fade away into nothingness, he "saw" the physical body of his friend mounting up to God.

The Hope of the Martyrs.

Eternal life was first conceived among the Hebrews as the exceptional reward of rare servants of God, like Elijah and Enoch; not until the second century B.C. did this become the hope for the whole Jewish people. It was during the terrible persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes in Jerusalem, described in the Books of Maccabees, that the sure and certain hope of a future life dawned upon the martyrs and became their strength (Dan. xii.). That death was followed by sleep and subsequent resurrection at some distant date, was the belief generally accepted in our Lord's day, save by the Sadducean party. Thus there was still no idea of

the reality of a conscious personal life apart from the actual material body.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS.

The truth of the survival of personality revealed to Elisha was demonstrated on the occasion of the Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah were recognized even by those who had not known them on earth; but the way in which it is understood has changed. To us, what happened to Elijah's body is not of vital importance, because Christ taught that immortality is independent of the corpse. He promised the thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," at the time when He knew their bodies would still be hanging upon the cross or lying in the sepulchre. In speaking with Martha about her brother, Lazarus, Jesus corrected the current belief in the "resurrection at the last day," by saying: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John xi. 24-26). St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Christians, clearly stated that "flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God," and further explained that the spirit will be clothed with a spiritual body fitted to its new environment (1 Cor. xv. 50 *ff.*).

Therefore the story of Elijah's ascension becomes a wonderful parable of spiritual truth, full of meaning, like all parable teaching, to those who have ears to hear.

CHAPTER X

MICAIAH AND THE "400"

BIBLE PASSAGE: (1 Kings xxii.).

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

Assyria made her first western push in 854 B.C., during the time of the three years' truce between Israel and Syria, mentioned in 1 Kings xxii. 2. An Assyrian inscription of this date records that Syria and Israel were fighting together in resistance to the threatened invasion. It is written that "Syria and Ahab of Israel" were both defeated by the Assyrian armies at the Battle of Karkar. Ahab had sent "two thousand chariots and ten thousand men."

Thus the deadly feud between Israel and Syria had been stilled for a few years; but as soon as the Assyrian armies withdrew the old quarrel broke out anew. Syria had pledged herself to restore certain cities, among them Ramoth Gilead, taken by her in a former war; but she had not done so. Ahab seized upon this breach of promise as pretext for an attack on his old rival, and thought the moment propitious, because he was trusting to Jehoshaphat of Judah to join him in the expedition.

THE 400 PROPHETS.

On the hill of Samaria, near to the city gate, the two kings, Ahab and Jehoshaphat, arrayed in their royal robes, were seated upon thrones of state; four hundred prophets belonging to the king's household stood around, and all was ready for the start so soon as the consultation should be over. Jehoshaphat wanted the encouragement of a good omen, and waited keenly for the prophets' reply to Ahab's question: "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to battle or shall I forbear?" "Go up; for the LORD shall deliver it into the hands of the king." In this reply the "400" may have spoken,

like honest yet mistaken patriots, voicing the popular conviction that Yahweh of Israel must prosper the armies of Israel. They may never have attempted to seek truth from God and proclaim the same whatever that might involve, risking thereby the king's wrath, loss of position, and even life itself. As we know, from the Mount Carmel story, the prophets on that occasion had not faced the question at issue nor honestly sought to discover the will of God, but they had left this task to Elijah. If this be the true explanation here, as on Carmel, these hireling prophets prophesied falsely by reason of their failure to seek the truth and receive inspiration from God.

If, on the contrary, their answer, "Go up . . and prosper," was a deliberately false message contradicting their own conviction as to God's revealed will, then they were consciously misleading king and people, rather than bear witness to God against the prevailing fashion.

Although both kings were waiting for the good omen to set forth on their expedition, when it was given neither trusted to it. Though a popular message, yet it inspired no confidence. Jehoshaphat was so dissatisfied that he inquired for another prophet "of the LORD," although there were already four hundred present. Why was yet another wanted? Ahab replied: "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD . . . but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me but evil." Very clearly Ahab thought of this "one" in a different light; he was not just the four-hundred-and-first. He was a man of character and individuality, who had incurred the king's hatred and was not yet cowed.

While an officer went to fetch this prophet—Micaiah by name—the four hundred sought to reassure themselves. They repeated the same words again and again, while one of their number exaggerated the first statement, declaring that the Syrians would be pushed back and utterly destroyed. Now when four hundred men repeat the same statement over and over again, whether

it be true or false, it cannot fail to make a certain impression. Many persons come to believe it because others do, and the constant reiteration increases the strength of the general conviction; nevertheless the two kings were not convinced, on the contrary they were uneasy.

The "One."

Before his arrival Micaiah had been told how matters stood and what he would be expected to say, in order to secure the royal favour. This suggestion never weighed with him, for he believed that the prophet's business was to seek God's will, and deliver His message. As he himself said, "What the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak." As Micaiah entered the royal presence, Ahab addressed him, by name, "Micaiah," and then put the test question: "Shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" His first reply was veiled in irony. He imitated the four hundred and repeated their words, implying—do you believe this, if so, why inquire further? But Ahab did not believe in their message and knew that he did not. For the moment he felt he must hear the truth, and adjured Micaiah to speak. Thus the message came: "I saw all Israel scattered . . . as sheep that have no shepherd."

The Vision of Micaiah.

Micaiah was still standing before Ahab, seated on his throne and surrounded by the "400," when he saw a vision of the LORD. The LORD appeared to him seated upon a throne and surrounded by spirits. Then there followed a strange dialogue, in which one of the spirits obtained permission from God to put "a lying spirit" into the minds of the "400." The vision gave an insight into Micaiah's thoughts, and showed how puzzled he was. Hitherto he may not have realized there were both true and false prophets. From whence did the false prophets obtain their message? "The LORD hath put a lying spirit" was a terrible saying, implying, as it did, that God Himself sent evil suggestions to the human

heart;* an idea only possible before the perfect righteousness of God had been revealed! As we have seen, what Micaiah attributed to inspiration was in all probability either the product of their own imagination, prompted by auto-suggestion, or a deliberate lie based on selfish interests.

The Vision Fulfilled.

There was still time to avert the threatened disaster; but no, the kings would not listen. Micaiah was thrown into prison and disregarded. Ahab went to his death.

The account of the battle for Ramoth Gilead tells of Ahab's death by a chance arrow. The vision might suggest that Ahab was unfairly misled; but the story shows that he went to battle against his own better judgment. He deliberately chose to accept the flattering words of the "400" and to reject Micaiah's true witness. Against his conscience he ignored the warning, and thus it came to pass that "Israel was scattered like sheep without a shepherd."

False Prophets in the New Testament.

It is useful to compare this story with what we read of the prophets in the New Testament. There were many Christian prophets in the early days of the Church. But the Christian leaders soon discovered that these also were of two kinds, the true and the false, and warned their converts to beware, and to distinguish between them, for not every man had a message, just because he was a prophet. There were some who came with inspired teaching from God, but there were others who spoke out of the imaginations of their own hearts. Therefore St. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians to test the prophets and see if they are really speaking "in the spirit of God" (1 Cor. xii. 1-3), and St. John earnestly implores his readers: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John iv. 1).

* 1 Sam. xvi. 14.

CHAPTER XI

ELISHA

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Elisha in time of War:

1. Elisha takes Syrian prisoners (2 Kings vi. 8-25).
2. Elisha plans a revolution in Damascus (2 Kings viii. 7-15).
3. Elisha orders a revolution in Israel (2 Kings ix.).
4. Elisha foretells the relief of Samaria (2 Kings vi. 24 to end vii. See xiii. 5.).
5. Elisha encourages Joash to win victories (2 Kings xiii. 14, 15).

Elisha in time of Peace:

1. Elisha purifies the village spring (2 Kings ii. 19-22).
2. Elisha provides for the widow's sons (2 Kings iv. 1-7).
3. Elisha enjoys the hospitality of the rich (2 Kings iv. 8-37).
4. Elisha shares a meal with the other prophets (2 Kings iv. 38-41).
5. Elisha welcomes a gift from an unknown friend (2 Kings iv. 42-44).
6. Elisha cures Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings v.).
7. Elisha helps prophets to build a house (2 Kings vi. 1-7).
8. Elisha dies and his bones are venerated as relics (2 Kings xiii. 20, 21).

PART I.—THE TASKS FULFILLED

ELISHA had resolved to carry out the two commands laid upon him by Elijah. We will now trace how the way was prepared for him to anoint Hazael the king in Damascus. At the time of Elijah's departure this task must have seemed impossible. Israel, east of Jordan, had lately been invaded by Syrian armies, and Ahab had been killed in the battle for Ramoth Gilead. After this the throne of Israel was occupied by weak kings, sons of Ahab, who had no power of holding the people together, or resisting an enemy. Yet Elisha felt that he was pledged to overthrow the reigning dynasty of Syria,

and to appoint a new king in Damascus. It was, indeed, a daring exploit even to contemplate, let alone accomplish. The Syrians yearly planned raids into Israel, such as were carried out by daring captains, like Naaman, who even took Israelites to Damascus as household slaves. But before long Elisha saw his opportunity.

Improbable as it might appear, the farmer Elisha was by nature a courtier, and possessed the gift of making friends and winning confidences. He interested himself keenly in the political situation and soon became the chief adviser of Israel's king. On several occasions, he heard rumours of the Syrian army's movements, and saved King Joram from traps laid by the enemy. The Syrians held a council of inquiry; at first they thought there must be a traitor in their own camp who gave away their secrets in the Court of Israel, but a wiser head declared Elisha to be the discoverer of their plans, and the man from whom they had most to fear.

It was suspected that Elisha was in Dothan, and the council decreed that an expedition of chariots and horsemen should encompass the city, and take the prophet prisoner. Now it happened that the city of Dothan was built on a mound in the midst of a valley, so that the Syrian hosts of chariots and horsemen could, literally, encamp round about it. They came up in great numbers during the dark hours of the night, meaning to draw their circle tighter and tighter, till no escape should be possible. In the early dawning, Elisha's young servant went out to survey, and, to his horror, found the valley full of military in every direction. But while the young man saw, with his eyes, the dreaded chariots of Syria, his master saw, with his understanding, the fiery chariots of God—*i.e.*, the mysterious host of angels sent for their protection. "Fear not," said Elisha, "for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." With intense faith, and real longing that his young friend might share the blessed certainty of Divine protection, Elisha prayed: "LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see." Master and servant were united in a bond of sympathy, as the

young man's eyes were opened to behold the heavenly brightness round about them. When Elisha prayed, the Syrians were advancing. There was not a moment to lose. They were searching for him. Would he be recognized. A flash of true wisdom illuminated Elisha's mind, and he knew what to do. He was face to face with the Syrians, but their understanding was dull. They must have expected to find Elisha terrified, and in hiding; it did not occur to one of them that this audacious fellow, standing in the open, was the prophet. With quick wit and fine courage, Elisha understood the situation and seized the opportunity. He offered himself to them as a guide! He told them that they had gone wrong, but that he would lead them to the city, and to the man whom they were seeking. No wonder if they suspected he must be a traitor hoping for a big reward! Anyhow, they followed for at least ten miles, a rough walk over the hills to Samaria. All the way Elisha led, and they blindly followed their unsuspected guide right to Samaria, through the gates and into the midst of the city. Suddenly the whole company realized that they had been tricked, and now they were hopelessly outwitted in the enemy's capital.

The great tidings reached the king, who came out to meet them. Overwhelmed with the sight of so many Syrian prisoners in their power, the king's first thought was to put them to death. He turned to Elisha, the hero of the hour, with these words: "Shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?" But Elisha rebuked him. His answer was just splendid. "Set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink and go to their master." Thus the Syrian captains went home humiliated. They had been out-manœuvred, and yet took home no grievous tale of cruel wrong to incite their fellow-countrymen to further hatred and war. On the contrary, Elisha's generosity in their captivity could not fail to be honoured, though the Syrians themselves would probably prefer to hush up the tale of their capture. They went back with a feeling of superstitious awe for the Israelite prophet, and spoke of him at home

as an uncanny person whom they would rather not meet again. We are not surprised to learn, from the Bible story, that for a time, at least, the "bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel."

Elisha's Mission to Damascus.

Now was Elisha's opportunity. At last there was peace between Israel and Syria, and Elisha's reputation had spread, and his name was respected by the leading men in Damascus, including the king. Elisha believed Yahweh to be the God of Israel only, and therefore to him the enemies of Israel were the enemies of God; thus he set forth to Damascus for the purpose of provoking a revolution and civil war. Elisha by so doing felt himself to be carrying out the commands of his God. He recognized that the moment for the attempt was favourable, and was determined to encourage an adventurous captain, Hazael, to seize the throne by the murder of King Benhadad, expecting that Syria would then be weakened by internal strife, and Israel freed from the fear and horror of invasion.

Now, it happened that Benhadad the king was ill, and, when he heard Elisha was journeying towards Damascus, he sent one of his captains to inquire whether or no he would recover from his sickness. Picture a long procession of forty camels laden with fruits and merchandise, winding its way out of the city by the river bank. This royal gift was sent to win the favour and summon the aid of the mysterious prophet in the emergency of the king's illness. Elisha must have looked at it from afar and marvelled over all the beauty and luxury of this wonderful city. But the thought uppermost in his mind was his mission; when and where should he be able to fulfil it?

The unexpected often happens. To Elisha's surprise the camel caravan drew up before him, the rich load was a present from the king, and the captain was delivering a message. As Elisha listened to the question concerning the king's health, he looked at the captain and felt quite certain this must be Hazael, the man chosen to be

king over Syria. No further search was necessary. Here was the man. First Elisha answered the inquiry concerning the king's health by giving the following message to be conveyed to King Benhadad. "Go, say unto him, Thou shalt surely recover; howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die." A strange contradiction appears in these words; but they evidently mean that, though the disease from which he was suffering would not kill Benhadad, yet his end was near. It remained for Elisha to tell Hazael the purpose of his coming. Before doing so he seems to have suddenly realized that this attempt to free Israel, by raising revolution in Syria, would fail of its purpose. As he watched Hazael standing there, he was filled with grim foreboding that this very man would inflict ghastly cruelties on his beloved Israel, yet he believed him to be the chosen king and in loyalty to his conviction made it known to him in these words: "The LORD hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

The Bible story tells nothing further of Elisha and the forty camels, but follows Hazael back to Damascus. There to allay suspicion he delivered only the first part of the message and left Benhadad expecting recovery. Meanwhile, fired with ambition and strengthened by the prophet's support, Hazael hatched a plot to assassinate his master and seize the throne.

Elisha's Opportunity in Israel.

The third task remained. Elisha felt himself called to overthrow the house of Ahab by anointing Jehu as king over Israel. Hazael of Syria had no sooner seized the throne than he attacked Israel furiously, round the disputed town Ramoth Gilead. The King of Israel, Joram, one of Ahab's sons, was wounded and brought back sick to the royal palace at Jezreel.

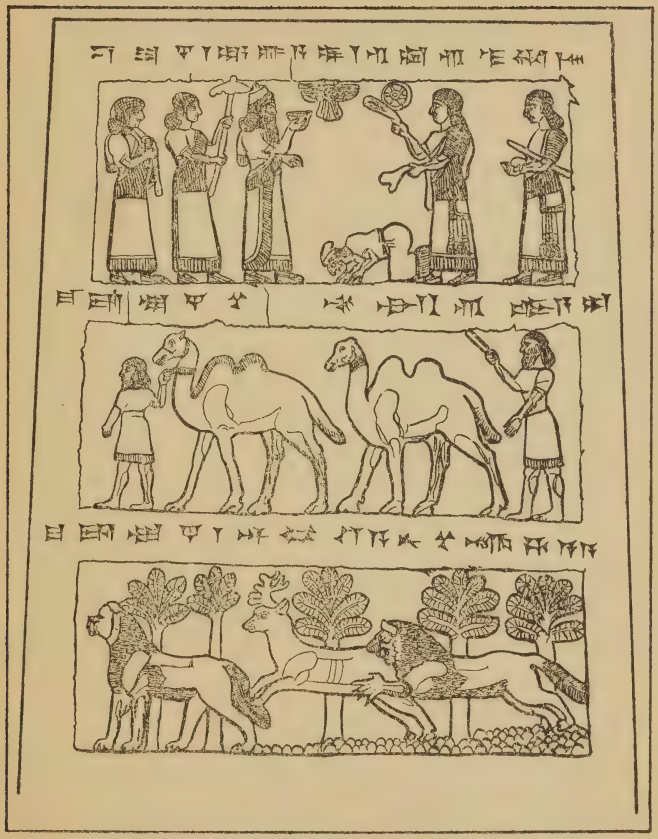
Elisha saw that events were leading up to a crisis and his opportunity was forthcoming. The house of Ahab had lost its old prestige. Ahab's seizure of Naboth's vineyard had made him very unpopular. Israel was a nation of small-holders, and where would they be under

a tyrant like that? Then too he had provoked the war with the Syrians which cost him his life. Jezebel and her Phœnician Court were too luxurious to be popular among country people, and Ahab's sons had shown themselves weaklings, unable to inspire confidence. On the other hand, the popular heroes were the prophets. It was Elijah who had won the victory on Carmel and championed Naboth's cause against Ahab. Micaiah had proved right, and Ahab wrong, over the ill-fated expedition against Ramoth Gilead. Elisha had shown himself of more value than an army against the Syrians.

It only needed a match to set fire to a revolution in Israel. Elisha struck that match. He summoned one of the prophets and sent him on an errand to the Israelite camp at Ramoth Gilead. There he was to deliver a secret message to Jehu, one of the captains. He was then to anoint him with oil and the words: "Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel," and order him to put to death the house of Ahab. This the messenger did; but the secret was soon divulged, and Jehu was acclaimed the chosen king by his fellow-officers. "Jehu is king," they cried. Thus a conspiracy was launched. Jehu assassinated Joram and seized the throne.

PART II.—ELISHA AND THE SYRIAN WARS

During the terrible times of Syrian invasion, Elisha was the one stay and comforter of a troubled people. For the study of a period of English history the difficulty is to choose the most reliable from among the number of books available; but to understand our present period of Israelitish history, we have to piece together scraps from the story in 2 Kings, Assyrian records preserved on baked clay tablets, and an Assyrian Black Obelisk now in the British Museum. When we do this, we shall find that the events recorded in 2 Kings by Israelitish chroniclers, and on Assyrian tablets and monuments by Assyrian scribes, fit together like a puzzle and form one picture.



Part of the Black Obelisk.

Jehu's Home Policy.

Jehu was a fierce, zealous man, ruthless and cruel, yet evidently with an idea of accomplishing thoroughly what he set himself to do and believed to be right. The story is very grim. The opening of his reign witnessed a wholesale slaughter of Ahab's sons, near relations, friends, courtiers, nobility, and all other influential men, save only a small group of Jehu's fellow-captains (2 Kings x. 11). But this was not all. A deceptive invitation was sent to those who were known to be priests, prophets, or worshippers of Baal, asking all to come openly to a festival at his temple in his honour, and declaring that the new king was one of his zealous worshippers. When all these were assembled Jehu ordered a general massacre. Such deeds as this were still done in Yahweh's Name. Israel was a very small land, and practically all her leading men, aristocracy, military, and civil officials were swept away; therefore she was left very open to attack from her enemies.

Hardly more than one hundred years later, the Israelite prophet Hosea looked back on these days and said that the blood which had been shed by Jehu was displeasing to God and had brought disaster on the country. Jehu had before him the example of Elijah who had slain many Baal prophets on Carmel. We shall find that Hosea was the first to understand that judgment can be full of love, and punishment can be the very opposite of cruel.

Jehu and Assyria.

In the year of Jehu's revolution, 841 B.C., Shalmaneser of Assyria made a second western campaign, of which there are sculptured pictures preserved on the "Black Obelisk"; one of them is Jehu bowing to the ground and offering tribute to the Assyrian king.

The inscription on this same obelisk records that the Phœnician cities of Tyre and Sidon also paid tribute, and that among the captures were "1,121 chariots, 470 battle horses, and the whole camp of Hazael, King of Damascus." Thus Israel, Phœnicia, and Syria were

completely defeated. Why did not Assyria realize her ambitions and establish herself on the Mediterranean? Why did she not make a further southern campaign to Egypt, while she kept her conquests secure as vassal states? The clay tablets supply the answer. The eldest son of the conquering king made a rebellion at home in Nineveh; the armies were recalled and the country was plunged in civil war.

Syria and her Invasions of Israel under Hazael.

Thus the west was for a time freed from the Assyrian terror. Syria quickly recovered from her losses, but Israel was in a weaker state. The Bible story tells what happened next. Hazael flew at her former foe, Israel. He made a furious attack on the east of Jordan and used horribly cruel instruments of war, probably chariots drawing sharp teeth used for threshing, referred to later by Amos. The Syrian armies took the country east of Jordan, then crossed the river and the plain of Esdraelon, marching right through Israel, plundering and destroying as they pressed onward to the Philistine town of Gath. This they captured and finally demolished. Instead of returning the same way, the Syrians crossed into Judah and marched up to Jerusalem, where Hazael shamelessly demanded the plunder of the Temple treasures as the price of his retreat. We can imagine the track of misery left behind by the Syrians as they returned to their own land through Judah and Israel; feeding themselves on the countryside, seizing cattle and sheep, trampling down vineyards, robbing orchards, rifling towns, and probably even seizing girls to take back for household slaves.

These raids into Israel continued, and grew increasingly terrible year by year. The writer of Kings described the Syrian army as like the flails used to thrash out the wheat, and likened the Israelites to chaff blown away, as dust. This terrible condition became even worse when Hazael's son Benhadad succeeded his father as king in Syria.

This Benhadad III. besieged Samaria, and the story

of the siege gives an idea of the state of misery prevailing in Israel. As we have noticed before, Samaria was built on a hill, and the Syrian army encamped around, thus preventing any supplies from entering the city. Day by day the misery of the citizens increased as food became scarcer and scarcer, till there was nothing eatable left. Elisha alone appeared to have kept his faith and courage and to have withstood all talk of surrender, because he knew the LORD purposed to save the city, if only they had the pluck to hold out. With calm assurance and absolute conviction he told the king and his chief captain: "To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." The chief captain ridiculed this extraordinary statement. "Behold," he said, "if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" Elisha replied that his lack of faith would prevent his sharing the plenty when it was within sight. The wonder came true, and the city was saved. When Israel was in direst need, the writer of Kings tells us, "the LORD gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians." Surely, this was the moment, and the following story tells of the living persons through whom God sent His saving help.

Four poor, miserable, outcast lepers were existing outside the city walls, not allowed to enter. In normal times friends and kind-hearted people brought them food or threw them bits; but now there was nothing. They wisely argued that if they remained where they were they must certainly die; why not make a bold venture and try to get through the enemy's camp? The Syrians could but kill them, and there was just a faint chance they might let them live. They ventured down in the dusk and to their bewildered surprise found tent after tent deserted; not a man left in the whole camp but everything abandoned. Horses, mules, gold, silver, raiment, better still, food and drink in abundance. Evidently the Syrians had fled pell-mell in hot haste. The lepers ate their fill and stowed away some of the

treasure; but before the day dawned they thought of the unutterable anxiety and misery within the walls. Perhaps the cries of the children reached their ears, as they said to one another: "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace." Speaking thus, they approached the city gate and told the porter.

When once the lepers told their story, this wondrous news spread like wildfire from mouth to mouth; the king believed it must be a trap set to entice the hungry people out and then slay them. It was decided to send chariots with swift horses to reconnoitre. The city waited in breathless anxiety for their return. The news was indeed startling; the lepers' story was true; all the valley right down to the Jordan was scattered over with garments and vessels cast away in haste.

There was no need for fear; the hungry people rushed into the forsaken camp and ate their fill. Scarcity was at an end; the markets of Samaria were filled with all manner of good things from the Syrian camp; but the unbelieving captain was crushed to death. Even so, Elisha's promise came true, and more than true. The people pushed over one another in uproarious excitement and joyful thanksgiving at this unexpected glorious deliverance and perhaps hardly noticed the captain's fate.

Whence came this sudden alarm throughout the Syrian camp? The Bible tells us a rumour spread that another enemy was upon them. It was even harder then than now to get accurate information. The names of dreaded foes were bandied about; were they Hittites? were they Egyptians? The panic grew and the Syrians fled in confusion, even as long before the Midianites had fled before Gideon and the "300." But here the Assyrian records come in to help us. They tell us that just at this very time the Assyrians made an attack on Syria. It was, therefore, the Assyrian king, Adad-nirari, who was referred to as Israel's saviour, for when the Syrians heard the rumour of the advance of his armies on their own homes in Damascus, they fled. The

Syrians were severely attacked and suffered heavily from Assyrian invasion; as a nation they were never so strong again.

Israel's Recovery under Joash and Jeroboam II.

At this point, therefore, the tide of Israel's fortune began to turn. Her rival Syria was crippled, and the dreaded Assyria was on the decline. For thirty years Assyria made no western expedition. The change for the better began in the reign of Joash. Elisha on his death-bed encouraged their king by two signs. First, he told him to shoot the arrows, and when his royal hands were upon the bow, the prophet laid his own above them. Elisha then said, "Shoot," and he shot. And he said: "The LORD'S arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria." Secondly, Elisha told him to smite the ground. This he did three times and then stayed, calling forth Elisha's displeasure.

These strange signs were to show the king that God would bless his efforts. The prophet's hands were laid upon his as a sign of strengthening—if the king stayed his efforts then God could not bless. Three times Joash smote the ground; three times did he smite the Syrians and thus regained the lost cities of Israel. His successor, Jeroboam II., continued the victories and brought in an era of peace and plenty.

PART III.—ELISHA, THE FRIEND OF ALL

Elisha had won a widespread reputation as the liberator of his country from the dreaded Syrians. He had shown himself wise as a serpent in the counsel of kings, and able to out-manœuvre the enemy. But, nevertheless, this courteous diplomatist had been born and bred a farmer. He was a lover of the soil, of freedom and country life, a man of shrewd sense and practical wisdom concerning the common things of every day. Therefore it is perhaps easier to picture him going in and out the houses of rich and poor, walking along the

highways and byways of Israel, taking a meal by the roadside, and willing to lend a hand in building a house. Elisha was the friend of all who sought his help or counsel, his welcome or his forethought.

Elisha in the Heart of His Friends.

The stories of Elisha preserved in 2 Kings portray his personality and give a true, natural, lifelike picture of this homely friend. He wrote nothing himself, but the tales of his life were treasured by those who loved him. Probably the stories were told orally at first, and only written down as his disciples grew old and feared that after their death the kind deeds of their dear master might be forgotten. We do not therefore look to these stories for exact accuracy of description or a diary of events, but we do seek to find a true portrait of Elisha as he lived in the hearts and imaginations of his followers. Still more, we can feel their warmth of loyal affection for this their friend who had never failed to come to the rescue in every emergency.

Elisha's Journeys.

Elisha toured around the cities and villages of Israel from his home on the slopes of Carmel. The news of his coming quickly spread, and as he entered a city many would come to welcome him.

Illustrative stories show the needs various persons brought to him, and the way he responded. Let us glance at some of these. At Jericho a group of citizens told him that the health of their pleasant city was endangered by unwholesome water. He asked them to bring a new cruse filled with salt, and going out to the spring he threw salt into the water, saying: "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters."

Another day a poor prophet's widow sought his help to save her sons from being sold as slaves to pay her debt. Elisha bid her collect empty vessels from kindly neighbours and fill them from her own single pot of oil; the supply proved sufficient to meet her need and only stayed when the vessels were all filled. We notice that

her faith and effort, together with the help of her sons and neighbours, were all needed before the blessing could be received.

Unknown to Elisha, his constant journeying and kindly deeds touched the hearts and won the admiration of strangers. One of these secret admirers was the rich lady of Shunem. She probably found out that his home on Carmel was many miles distant, and thoughtfully offered him a room and hospitality when in her neighbourhood. The story of the blessing Elisha brought to that household was beautifully and simply told.

Elisha and the Prophets.

Elisha's relations with the "Schools of the Prophets" are also illustrated. In time of dearth, Elisha visited the settlement at Gilgal, bringing them food; while it was cooking over an open fire one of the prophets went in search of some herbs to add to the soup, but by mistake he brought back a poisonous gourd and put it into the pot. As the party were sitting round eating, the poison was detected and a cry raised: "O man of God, there is death in the pot." Elisha promptly ordered meal to be brought, and threw it into the caldron, saying: "Pour out for the people that they may eat," and no one took any hurt from it.

Another time he met with a group settlement who wanted to build a larger house. At their invitation Elisha went with these prophets into the Jordan Valley to cut timber and help in the work. As one was chopping, his axehead came off and fell into some water. He called in anxiety: "Alas! my master, for it was borrowed," and Elisha, with the aid of a stick, brought the axehead to the surface, thus making "the iron to swim."

The Message of Elisha's Life.

Elisha was not a preacher but a doer. It is therefore through his actions, rather than in his words, that we seek to find the message of his life. Nothing was beneath his notice or outside his sphere of work. Wherever

and whenever his help was called for, it was forthcoming. He was frequently called "the man of God," and believed to have a Divine source of power at his command. This, as a prophet, he brought to bear upon the problems of daily life and, because the supply was from God, it sufficed to meet every emergency and satisfy every need. In the minds of his friends Elisha was a "wonder worker"; and after his death even his bones came to be regarded as wonder-working relics, for his disciples loved the marvellous, because to them it was the way God's hand could be felt and His presence seen.

We repeat there are no reports of eye-witnesses and no possibility of obtaining exact knowledge as to what did happen. May we not feel here, as in the case of the Elijah miracles, that the spiritual message is not dependent on the historical accuracy? Might we not have placed a different interpretation on the actual occurrence and said, "there is the axehead stuck in the weeds!" instead of "Elisha has made 'the iron to swim'?" Is it true that, whereas Elisha was called to bear witness to an occasional advent of Divine power on behalf of men and women, it has become our privilege to learn to discern God's working in the ordered course of all creation, alike in spiritual forces and in the material universe?

It remains to consider Elisha's international message. We know that he believed Yahweh to be the national God of Israel, and devoted himself to the patriotic service of his country in war and peace. Was patriotism enough? The story of Naaman and the story of Dothan answer the question, and at first seem to present a striking contrast to the rest of Elisha's life.

The Story of Naaman.—Naaman, the powerful military captain of Syria's armies, had raided Israel and even himself carried away girl slaves; yet when he came in need as a leper, Elisha cured him in the name and the power of Israel's God.

The Story of Dothan.—When Elisha took prisoner the picked troops of Syria, he refused to have them

butchered, but ordered bread and water to be set before them and let them go free.

On these two occasions Elisha rose above the ideas of his time and even above his own. Through his service of men, he discovered the purpose of God to be greater than he had previously known or conceived it to be. For in these his noblest acts Elisha showed Christian love to his bitterest enemies.

CHAPTER XII

THE CALL OF AMOS

The Book of Amos

The Date of the Book (Amos i. 1).
Six Judgments on the Neighbours of Israel—Syria, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab—(Amos i. 3 to ii. 4).
Two Judgments on Judah and Israel (Amos ii. 4 to end).
Five Addresses First Spoken in the Cities of Israel:
1. "Hear this word" (Amos iii. 1 to end).
2. "Hear this word" (Amos iv. 1 to end).
3. "Hear ye this word" (Amos v. 1 to end).
4. "Woe to them" (Amos vi. 1 to end).
5. "Hear this" (Amos viii. 4-7.)

Five Visions of the Coming Judgment:
1. The Locusts (Amos vii. 1-3).
2. The Fire (Amos vii. 4-6).
3. The Plumb-line (Amos vii. 7-9).
4. The Basket of Fruit (Amos viii. 1-2).
5. The Falling Temple (Amos ix. 1).

The Picture of the Judgment (Amos viii. 3; 7 to end; ix. 2-10).
Three Verses in Praise of God the Creator (Amos iv. 13; v, 8; ix. 6.
The Interview Between Amos and Amaziah the High Priest at Bethel (Amos vii. 10 to end).
Epilogue (Amos ix. 11 to end of book). This contains the promise of a joyful return of Israel, and was probably added by a later prophet.

His Home Surroundings.

The home of Amos was Tekoa in Judah, about ten miles south of Jerusalem. Tekoa was situated on a hill, so that Amos could see far over the rocky, barren country away to the rolling waste of the desert. There was a stern grandeur in the lonely, desolate hills, waterless and barren, excepting for a few weeks after the spring rains when the wilderness was carpeted with flowers. On these hills Amos kept his sheep and on their lower slopes he tended his sycomore-trees. These yielded a coarse kind of fig which was eaten by the poor.

The shepherd's life was hard and dangerous. He needed to be always on the alert. The lion's roar and the hyena's howl were warnings of approaching danger to the flock. The good shepherd had literally to fight with wild beasts and be ready to give his life for the sheep. Amos refers to occasions when he was worsted in the struggle and only rescued mangled pieces out of the lion's mouth, "two legs or a piece of an ear" (iii. 12). The shepherd learned to know the signs of the coming storm among the mountains; he knew the storm could not be averted by ignoring these signs. If he were caught by a sudden storm, he might lose his sheep or be overcome by the darkness of the night. Then he might have to come down a steep descent with only the stars to guide him, maybe with a tired lamb on his shoulders.

There were days when the shepherd would see no sign of another human being, other days when he might come across a snare set for a bird. This gave him hope of meeting another shepherd, perhaps at the noonday's rest by a well. On another occasion in the distance he might hear the sound of the war trumpet echo and re-echo through the hills; this would tell of the life of cities, and suggest scenes of panic-stricken people running hither and thither, alarmed at the signal of an enemy's approach (iii. 3-6).

Coming down from the rocky summits, Amos reached his groves of sycomores. Here, too, there was constant uncertainty. The harvest might never come. One year, perhaps, when the trees looked promising, Amos would discern a dark cloud coming up, not the much-needed rain, but locusts or blight. The cloud settled on the trees and would not rise till every green leaf had been devoured. Another year a long drought during the winter rainy season would spoil all chance of a crop (iv. 7-9).

Truly, Nature was hard and unrelenting, but behind all these happenings Amos saw a Living Pesonality, stern yet grand, often utterly incomprehensible yet always purposeful. He was sure nothing happened

This map illustrates the peril of Palestine in the eighth century B.C. owing to its situation on the highway between the rival empires of Assyria and Egypt.

apart from God, and even the greatest mysteries had a meaning. The loneliness and danger lifted the shepherd's thoughts on high to Him who was the Maker of the starry sky, "Who formeth the mountains" (iv. 13). Amos depended on God day by day and learned to be on the watch for His guidance, and sought to understand His purpose. We shall find how he was led to discover that the Controller of the winds and the storms was also the Ruler of the destinies of all mankind. "The LORD the God of Hosts is His Name."

His Journeys to Israel.

Naturally Amos depended for his living on selling the wool from his sheep and the figs from his sycomores. To get a sale he had to take them to market himself. Why he went to Israel rather than Jerusalem, we do not know; possibly he found a readier market. But certain it is that he journeyed to the chief market towns of the northern kingdom and, as we find from his book, he knew Samaria, Bethel, and Gilgal very well.

Times had changed in Israel since the days of Elisha, the tide of conquest had turned in her favour. The present king, Jeroboam II., had extended her boundaries to their furthest limits; to Hamath in the Lebanons in the north, and to the Dead Sea in the south. Her old enemy Syria was subdued and Damascus appears, for a short time at least, to have been subject to Israel. It is not impossible that Amos prolonged one of his journeys to that wonderful city, and actually saw her markets and heard the talk in her streets or open air bazaars.

His Observations.

Picture the shepherd Amos, used to his desolate hills, in the populous cities of Israel. Nothing escaped his keen eyes and quick observation. He saw all there was to be seen and penetrated beneath the surface to the meaning of things. It was the time of Israel's greatest material wealth and prosperity. Nothing short of a

revolution had taken place in the life of her people. A country of small-holders had become a nation of city dwellers. Amos was struck by the sight of these modern cities. He was astonished at the whole manner of life, the stone-built houses, costly upholstered furniture, and extravagant tastes. These comforts and luxuries of civilization were an absolute contrast to his own frugal life. He observed them very closely to discover what were their effects on the people.

(*a*) *The Rich.*—First, he noticed that riches were possessed by comparatively few persons belonging to a leisured class. He observed that they encouraged laziness and were accompanied by listlessness and want of vitality. The rich were, he tells us, "at ease"; they lay on beds of ivory and "stretched themselves upon their couches"; and they fed on dainties, "the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall." They had opportunities of music and singing, yet they were lacking in interest and craved excitement. This led to excessive wine drinking, and frequently even the women egged on their husbands saying: "Bring and let us drink" (vi. 4-6; iv. 1). This kind of existence was useless, but the effects of it were worse, because it hardened their hearts towards their brethren. Amos afterwards wrote of them: "They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," evidently because they had become too callous for the condition of their fellow-countrymen to give them any pain.

(*b*) *The Poor.*—Amos looked in vain for his own equals, small-holders and shepherds, independent and free to develop their own land, tend their own flocks and herds, and market their own goods. In their place he discovered that the poor of these new cities were all in the employ of the richer classes. By conversation he found out that the rich had bought up the small-holdings and turned them into large estates. Israel was now a country of big landowners. Moreover, there was a great gulf between rich and poor, increased by the existence of a new class of merchants, who did all the buying and selling in the market-places.

The poor were being used as a means of money-making and treated more as pawns in a game than as men. They were oppressed by hard labour and even sold into slavery. Thus, for example, a family man reduced to extreme poverty through bad harvests, sickness or the like, had first sold his small-holding, later his house and goods, to get food. When he had nothing left to pawn he would sink ever deeper into debt. If no one had pity on him and gave him a chance, what next? When the moneylender demanded payment, he would be compelled to offer himself to work as a slave to redeem his debt or, like the case of the widow in Elisha's day, allow his children to be enslaved, rather than watch them die of starvation. Amos twice referred to this terrible custom of taking advantage of people's poverty and misfortune to procure slave labour in these words: "They have sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes"—in modern English, "for a song" (ii. 6, 7; v. 11, 12; viii. 4-6).

Amos looked yet deeper and realized increasingly the unfairness of the existing state of affairs. Very often he discovered that the fortunes of the wealthy had been acquired by unfair means, even by robbery and unscrupulous over-reaching. The judges belonged to the influential classes and, alas! were open to bribes, therefore the poor had no chance of a hearing. In practice there was one law for the rich and another for the poor.

(*c*) *The Middlemen.*—It was to the market that Amos took his goods and there mixed with the traders of many lands. Among them were doubtless Phœnicians from Tyre, and Aramæans from Damascus, probably also Moabites and Edomites from beyond Jordan. Look at the map and you will see that the Plain of Esdraelon was the natural trade route. Amos must have seen camel caravans from Damascus laden with riches of the Orient, among them bales of coloured silks still famous to-day. Phœnician traders spread out their wares, beautiful wrought silver and ivory work, viols and harps, pens and parchment. Possibly Amos heard them tell of their voyages round the Great (Mediterranean) Sea and

beyond to our own island. Maybe they showed him some utensils made of tin from the Cornish mines. The Moabites brought wool from the highland sheep of their land and no doubt competed with the Judæan shepherd. Then, too, Amos must have seen the bronze weights used by the Aramæan merchants, and for the first time watched men writing with a pen on parchment. It must have been absorbingly interesting. We can be sure he missed no opportunity of finding out all he could about these strange lands, their religion, manners, and customs.

Certainly Israel was gaining much. The rich and varied products of the known world were being sold in her market-places. But Amos observed more closely. How were these privileges being used? As he walked in and out of the jostling crowd, he both heard and saw many things. Here was short measure of wheat being sold to an unsuspecting purchaser; there in some hidden corner chaff was being mixed with the corn. The Israelite merchants had no sense of honesty. Throughout the market the ruling spirit was love of gain.

On occasions, when he happened to speak with groups of traders on the Sabbath, he was astonished to hear them scorn the holy days as interruptions to trade. Such words as these were unforgettable: "When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn, and the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit?" (viii. 5).

(*d*) *Popular Religion.*—To the outward eye the Israelites, rich, poor, and merchants alike, were a religious people.

The weekly Sabbath and the monthly festival of the new moon were strictly kept. The hubbub of the market was stilled, and Amos would observe the people crowding up to the local high places. There upon the altars the customary sacrifices were offered. The tithes for the upkeep of these sanctuaries were readily paid. Every care was taken to observe the exact ritual of the "peace offering," "burnt offering" and "meal offering." Amos often heard people say that their God was with

them, and express the hope that the "Day of the LORD" would come.

But his keen eye sought in vain for a prophet or a Nazarite. Was there no prophet to deliver a message from God? No Nazarite to witness by his life of total abstinence from wine to the need of temperance and moderation? He made inquiry and found that the prophets had been reduced to silence by the people's command, "Prophesy not"; probably they, like the "400" of Elijah's day, had not the courage to resist public opinion. The Nazarites had been tempted to break their vows: "Ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink." Many in Israel found their example shamed them and wanted to indulge themselves with no public example to rebuke them.

Amos saw the motive of their worship. It was simply done to win the favour of God and render His blessing doubly sure. The average Israelite believed that Yahweh was their own national God and they were the people of His choice. He would protect them in return for their offerings. Thus they felt themselves secure. This popular idea of Yahweh as their God strengthened their national pride. They appeared to be certain that Israel would ever be strong and Samaria prosperous, that the merchants would continue to make their piles and the rich to enjoy the luxuries secured by other people's labour. As for the poor they were too crushed to make themselves heard. This deep-rooted idea of fixed security amazed Amos, who felt the time was one of rapid change.

His Reflections.

Amos thought over these things that he had heard and seen. If we are right in supposing that Amos made several visits to and from Israel—certainly one before his call—then he returned home with all these scenes in his mind to think hard. Amos had learnt to know God among the stern realities of a strenuous life. Like Elijah he believed that the LORD God of Israel was a Righteous God and Righteousness was His unalterable law. The life of Israel! Was it not all a sham? Was

there any truth or soundness in it? How could this be? What would be the consequence? "Shall horses run upon the rock?" Nay, they will fall over the precipice and be dashed to pieces.

HIS CALL.

Amid the tumult of conflicting questionings came the peace of certainty. God was speaking in the "still small voice." The LORD had need of the shepherd to sound the alarm and to deliver His message. "The LORD took me from following the flock and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." This gave him an absolute right to speak and an overmastering impulse to do so; "The LORD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (vii. 15; iii. 8).

CHAPTER XIII

THE MESSAGE DELIVERED BY AMOS

AMOS returned to the cities of Israel burning with zeal to deliver his message. We can picture him at the city gates, on the hill-tops at the local sanctuaries, or in corners of the market-places, surrounded by groups of stray listeners. His fearless, searching words attracted crowds and won attention. His sermons were striking and original and his words rang true, moving the hearers to varied feelings of wonder and resentment.

THE MESSAGE.

Here was a message for the representatives of every nation, too stirring to be ignored even by those who resented such an outburst from an unknown herdsman.

All the Israelites knew the tales of their great, national heroes, Elijah and Elisha. Elijah had proclaimed Yahweh as the one God of Israel, but Amos revealed Him as the God of all the nations. Elijah and Elisha had thought of the other countries as outside the dominion of Yahweh; Baal ruled in Phœnicia, Rimmon in Syria, Chemosh in Moab; but Amos publicly proclaimed that the God of Israel was the one Lord, and His rule was limited by no political frontiers. This Yahweh was a living, righteous God, the one Judge of the earth and the one Lord over all the nations.

But Amos went deeper than this, when he told his listeners that this righteous Lord was concerned with all human life. "Let judgment roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream" (v. 24) was His tremendous command. He was the LORD of the nation's whole life. In every department of public and private life and work, whether in the market, the law court, or the family, as also in all dealings between man and man, employer and employed, rich and poor, buyer and seller, God required right and justice. No nation was exempt from all responsibility, for Yahweh was

the Lord of all; but the God of righteousness was always absolutely fair and therefore did not expect more than was possible.

Amos had mixed with traders of many lands and knew well that, though they had not been given the same opportunities as the Israelites to know God and His will, yet they were not quite ignorant. They had the sense of right and wrong and recognized certain acts were noble and to be admired, whereas others were evil and to be detested. According to their possibilities they were judged, as we shall see from the following pronouncements.

The First Sermon.

Probably the first sermon that Amos preached was the one with which he opened his book (i., ii.). It contained a special message for eight nations, first for six foreign countries, and then the two home lands, Judah and Israel. Very possibly representatives of all these countries were present; they were all near and all traded with Israel. As they listened they learnt that Yahweh the righteous LORD knew what their countries had been doing and expected every nation to live up to its highest standard.

Amos began by speaking to the foreigners and we can imagine the thrilled attention of the Israelites as they heard the sins of their neighbours and enemies denounced. They—"the Chosen People"—felt comfortably superior to these outsiders.

Judgment on Six Foreign Nations.

Syria and Ammon.—These two countries are condemned for the same sin, barbarous cruelty in war. Amos referred to an invasion of Gilead by Hazael of Damascus when he was joined by the people of Ammon. During this campaign "threshing instruments of iron" were used by the invading armies; these were blades with sharp teeth projecting from the war chariots. The latter were driven through the villages, cruelly injuring and casting aside men, women and children like chaff.

Even in these cruel times, Amos knew that such a mode of warfare was against the conscience of the best Syrians and Ammonites. Although these invaders were heathen, yet they were human enough to feel such cruelty was hateful. Therefore in so doing they had sinned against the one righteous LORD.

Gaza and Tyre.—These two cities represented their nations, Philistia and Phœnicia. Gaza was the only important city of the Philistines still prosperous at this time and Tyre was the chief port of the Phœnicians. Gaza and Tyre are mentioned by Amos rather than their countries, because they were centres of the slave trade.

Slavery has not always been considered evil; in those days prisoners of war were made slaves as a matter of course; but Amos accused the Philistines and the Phœnicians of having made raids on villages and carried off all the inhabitants—" the whole people." This cruelty against the children, the aged, and the sick, torn from their homes and sold like cattle in the markets, was so revolting that even the slave traders themselves might have known it was horrible and must have stifled their better natures in their desire to make money. Therefore their action was a sin against the righteous LORD.

Edom.—The people of Edom, the Edomites, were the descendants of Esau, just as the Israelites were the descendants of Jacob; they were therefore near of kin.

Relationship was a very sacred tie, then as now, and would be recognized and regarded as such by all Edomites. Amos therefore tells them that they had sinned against the righteous LORD, when on one particular occasion they had taken advantage of Israel's troubles to inflict an injury upon her. He referred to the incident in these words: " He did pursue his brother with a sword."

Moab.—The Moabites had outraged the feeling of reverence for the dead, when after a victory over the Edomites they had publicly treated the body of the King of Edom with disrespect. By this act they too had sinned against the righteous LORD.

Judgments on Judah and Israel.

Judah.—Amos now spoke of his own nation, Judah; their sin, he said, was worse, because God had given them more light to see truth and right. He had revealed His will and given them commandments through His prophets, but "They have rejected the Law of the LORD and have not kept His statutes."

Israel.—Most of his hearers were Israelites, and we can picture Amos turning to these expectant listeners, so confident in their favoured position and so certain of their superiority. In striking words he startled them out of their delusion as he contrasted God's treatment of them with their ingratitude to Him and harsh treatment of one another. God had led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness, given them the promised land and strength to overcome their enemies. He had raised up from among them prophets and Nazarites to teach and direct them. They, the Israelites, had taken His gifts as a matter of course without valuing them, and had even silenced the prophets and tempted the Nazarites to break their vows. In contrast to the gracious bounty of God towards their nation, the influential and most powerful among the Israelites sought to enrich themselves by oppressing and ill-treating their own fellow-countrymen.

We are left to imagine for ourselves with what amazement, rage or scorn these words were received by the different persons in that crowd. Doubtless they were repeated from mouth to mouth and reached an ever wider circle, till they came to the ears of Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel, and eventually to the king, Jeroboam II.

The Five Addresses.

Out of all the addresses Amos must have delivered, certainly in Bethel, probably also in Gilgal and Samaria, only five (and one of these is a fragment) have been preserved. In these addresses he speaks with simple directness against the sins of public and private life, which we discussed in the last chapter. But he traces all the

various evils of society, as he saw it, to certain main causes. These were wrong ideas firmly fixed in the popular mind, finding expression in evil manners and customs, even in thoroughly dishonourable conduct.

1. *Privilege without Responsibility.*—We have already seen that the Israelites thought themselves superior to all others and safe in their assured position as "the Chosen People." They realized that they had received great blessings, but these they regarded as signs of God's favour to them beyond all others and were therefore strengthened in their national pride.

Amos, to their astonishment, declared that although it was true Yahweh had brought them up from Egypt, it was also equally true that He had watched over and guided other nations. "Have not I brought up Israel from Egypt and the Philistines from Captor (in Crete) and the Syrians from Kir?" Even the dark-skinned Africans were His people as much as the Israelites: "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?" (ix. 7).

Yet it certainly was true that Israel had been granted greater opportunities to know God and His will for men; just because of this higher standard revealed through Moses, Elijah, and Amos himself, more was expected of them and their sins were more, not less, grievous in God's sight. Even as, to-day, more is expected from professing Christians than from heathen.

Therefore, Amos delivered this message to the Israelites: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities" (iii. 2). This was a new idea. Israel had been used to think of herself as a favourite and spoilt child and to behave accordingly; but Amos taught her this was an entire mistake. She had been called and chosen of God to receive special training to fit her for a great mission.

Later, after Israel's captivity, it was revealed to Judah that her call was for world service and that from her nation the Messiah should come. Prophets, men of clear vision of God and His purpose for the world, had been

sent to prepare both Israel and Judah; but this high calling involved responsibility, as privilege always must.

Amos sounded a trumpet call, bidding Israel set up a higher standard of life and behaviour and not be content with low ideals or tolerate injustice within her borders. He called upon the nation as a whole to surrender pride in themselves and set their affections on God and His righteousness.

2. *Worship without Morals.*—Amos had witnessed the exact observances of religious feasts and Sabbaths, the sacrificial offerings at the high places, etc., but boldly declared that such worship was unacceptable to God, because the motive behind it was wrong. The truth was that popular religion in Israel was a mockery. For the Israelites were worshipping a false god of their own imagination, who like themselves would accept bribes to win his favour; whereas in reality the true God was righteous and their sinful lives could not be hidden under a cloak of religious observances. Such unreal worship, far from being pleasing to God, was actual sin against Him and the words which accompanied it were nothing more than a meaningless noise. Therefore he called, in irony, "Come to Bethel and transgress," and spoke in God's name concerning their offerings: "I hate, I despise your feasts. . . . Yea, though ye offer Me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them. . . . Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs" (iv. 4; v. 21-23).

3. *God without Goodness.*—The Israelites did not realize their sin. They constantly said the LORD God of Hosts was with them, and they eagerly expected a great day, when He would visibly manifest Himself as their King and lead them to triumph over their enemies.

Amos sought to explain that God as they conceived Him would not be righteous, once again He was the God of their own imagination not the Living God. If they really honestly wanted God to be with them, they on their part must genuinely seek Him.

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

"Seek ye Me, and ye shall live. . . . Seek the LORD, and ye shall live" (iv. 12; v. 4).

But the search must be after the living, righteous LORD. "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of Hosts, shall be with you as ye say: 'Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate'" (v. 14, 15).

Amos made it quite clear that the search after God and the desire for goodness are inseparably united; to divide the quest is unthinkable. Thus Amos set before Israel a great alternative: Either seek God with heart and mind, in deed and truth, and live in the sunshine of light and life, or pursue a false ideal and sink into the darkness of death.

Christ built on the foundation of Amos, when He spoke of the urgency of this quest for righteousness as of the first importance. "Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).

CHAPTER XIV

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The Rejection of the Message.

Doubtless, when Amos first declared God's message and called upon Israel to rise to her splendid opportunity, he must at least have hoped for, even if he did not expect, an enthusiastic response. How disappointing to watch the self-righteous people turn a deaf ear to all warnings and give a cold or hostile reception to his urgent call to a nobler life!

We do not know the order in which the addresses recorded in his book were spoken; possibly some of the earliest were not written down, but in those preserved Amos has already felt the bitterness of rejection. The people were indifferent or openly antagonistic to the message. Consequently Amos became sterner in his denunciations and more and more convinced of the nation's doom. In one passage this certainty overwhelmed him with such intensity that he spoke of Israel's fall as a present fact: "The Virgin daughter of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise." Very possibly, as he spoke, he saw a mental picture of an enemy army encamped around Samaria and a troop of captives being led away. "They shall take you away with hooks and your residue with fish-hooks" (v. 2; iv. 2).

This deep note of tragedy sounds throughout his prophecies. The cities are prosperous, the people are gay and thoughtless, but a dark cloud of doom hangs over all; the busy markets, the rich vineyards, the fine houses, the merry-making and the revelry, even the sanctuaries on the hill-tops, are all about to be overwhelmed by a great disaster. "Ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof." "The revelry . . . shall pass away." "Gilgal

shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to naught" (v. 11; vi. 7; v. 5).

Amos sternly warned Israel that, unlike their expectations, the "Day of the LORD" would end in darkness and terror from which there would be no escape. Amos meant by a "Day of the LORD" a critical time in history such as he knew his own to be, especially rich in revelation of God and opportunity for higher service. If the revelation of God's will and purpose given through the prophets at such a time was rejected and the people failed to respond, Amos foresaw "the Day" would close amid the despair of lost opportunity and bitter remorse. Such anguish was described by Amos and later prophets under the picture of the horrors that accompany great calamities.

WARNINGS FROM THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

Amos tried to compel the people to feel the seriousness of the moment and to take warning before it was too late. He reminded them of the disasters of the last few years, still vividly remembered by many of them—the seasons of bad harvests and consequent scarcity of food in the cities; the times of drought aggravated to some by the tantalizing storms raining upon one vineyard but sweeping over the next, leaving it dry and withered; the dreadful pests and locust swarms that frequently ate up every green leaf on the vines and olives. Worse even than these were the ravages of plague that struck down whole households with none to bury them and carried off the population of the villages, leaving only a few terror-stricken people, as in the case of the one survivor hiding in the "innermost parts of the house," and afraid to speak or even to hear the name of the LORD, lest more evil should befall him. Then, too, the country had in times past suffered the horrors of invasion and ghastly fires, often as terrible as that of Sodom and Gomorrah in days of old.

Did not all these calamities and dangers show how entirely dependent man was on God? Despite her own helplessness Israel had been preserved again and again;

she was like "a brand plucked out of the burning" and given a further chance; "yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the LORD."

Amos foresaw yet another danger. On the distant horizon "beyond Damascus," he knew the military empire of Assyria was not dead, but was at the moment like a slumbering giant, who might awake and stride forth westward over the heads of the smaller nations. Though he does not mention Assyria by name, he clearly has this empire in his mind—*e.g.*, "They shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath (in the north) unto the brook of the Arabah" (the Dead Sea).

While these perplexing thoughts were surging in his mind and he was trying to give warning to others, God granted him five visions.

THE FIVE VISIONS OF JUDGMENT.

1. *The Locusts.*—Amos sees a cloud of locusts coming up over the grass after the "king's mowings"; this meant the first hay crop, which was commandeered by the king. The second crop was all the people had to depend upon for their livelihood, and he watched the locusts settle and devour every blade of grass. Overcome with pity, Amos intercedes with God: "O LORD God, forgive, I beseech Thee; how shall Jacob (Israel) stand? for he is small." The LORD granted his petition and promised this devastation should not take place: "It shall not be" (vii. 1-3).

2. *The Fire.*—The second vision is similar. Amos sees a fire "devour the great deep" and come up towards the land. He is again filled with pity, intercedes with God, and hears the promise: "This also shall not be." By these visions Amos learned that God did not will destruction; His will was to warn, to spare, and to forgive; moreover, He was ready to hear His servant's prayer. They were also in accord with what Amos had observed in the many instances when Israel had been delivered in times of peril (vii. 4-6).

3. *The Plumb-line.*—Amos sees the LORD standing by a wall "with a plumb-line in His hand," and hears

these words: "I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more."

A plumb-line was a piece of lead on the end of a rope, used by builders to test whether a wall was straight or no. The meaning is obvious: God, the Builder, was testing Israel. Here was a plain matter-of-fact test: Were the walls of Israel's moral character straight or were they crooked? The answer was unmistakeable. The wall of Israel could not stand the test; therefore there could be no security and collapse was imminent. This the LORD could not overlook. "The sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword" (vii. 7-9).

4. *The Basket of Fruit.*—Amos sees a basket of fruit and hears the LORD saying: "The end is come upon My people Israel." The Hebrew words translated "summer fruit" and "end" are pronounced the same; thus the sight of the over-ripe fruit suggested the end.

Possibly this vision was suggested to Amos by a basket of figs in the market-place. Let us think of one and imagine different persons walking past it. The fruit-grower would note the size of the figs, the artist might be attracted by their lovely colour, the business man would be more interested in the profit to be made, the passer-by might cast a longing glance towards them; whereas Amos at once noticed they were over-ripe and connected them with the thought ever present to his mind. How like these figs were to Israel, beautiful to look upon but rotten within! How near both were to their end! (viii. 1-2).

5. *The Falling Temple.*—Amos sees the LORD by an altar and He says: "Smite the chapiters, that the thresholds may shake: and break them in pieces on the head of all of them" (ix. 1).

Although there was no temple in Israel, Amos must have heard about it even if he did not himself know Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem and he could picture the magnificent stone pillars with the beautifully carved

capitals. In the vision Amos sees the great pillars fall at the command of God and crush the worshippers. The imagery of the temple is used as a dramatic picture of the destruction of all organized worship in Israel. The sanctuaries of Israel would not long be centres of worship, they would be destroyed and left desolate.

This vision teaches that not chance, or fate, or ill luck over-rules Israel's future, but the Living God. His righteous laws, if disobeyed, work disaster; yet God the Creator is behind His laws, working out His purpose, He never deserts His world or leaves it to decay, like a gardener might the basket of rotting figs.

Therefore these two last visions express different sides of the same truth. Israel falls in pieces like rotten fruit. Israel is broken in pieces by God, because she disobeys His laws. These are true facts but not the whole truth, for Amos knew nothing of the love of God and His saving purpose for mankind.

The Awful Picture of the Coming Judgment.

Convinced of a coming overwhelming catastrophe, Amos described the invasion of a foreign army as accompanied by the horrors of a terrible earthquake and solar eclipse, so terrifying to a superstitious people. He had himself experienced the earthquake of 763 B.C., and dated his opening prophecy by it, "two years before the earthquake." He recalled the impressions it made upon him and used them to illustrate the horrors of the coming time. The earth tremors—"Shall not the land tremble?" The sun is eclipsed at midday—"I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." A tidal wave will inundate the land —"It shall rise up wholly like the river; and it shall be troubled and sink again like the River of Egypt." This reference to the Nile appears to mean that as the Nile rises and floods the country, so will the wave accompanying the earthquake (viii. 8, 9).

But the supreme horror was the terror of the fugitive vainly endeavouring to flee from the power of God. This dread picture of an avenging God seeking to destroy all

sinners should be contrasted with Christ's parable of the Good Shepherd seeking the lost lamb and bringing it home on His shoulders rejoicing.

Even in this darkness of gloom and despair, Amos foresaw a time of repentance and regret for lost opportunities. But God would send no more prophets and there would be a famine, "not of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." Unlike the present, he imagined the people running hither and thither, "from sea to sea, from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD and shall not find it." Though the people repent, Amos sees no place for repentance "in that day when the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst" (viii. 11-13). In this gruesome account he sees only one ray of hope. He once likened the judgment to the sifting of wheat from chaff, and gives God's promise in these words: "I will sift the house of Israel . . . like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." The righteous LORD will not permit one good grain to be lost.

The Meeting between Amos and Amaziah.

This is the only story in the book, and we cannot tell exactly at what point in his career the famous interview took place.

Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel, heard reports of Amos and his preaching. He was angered and alarmed by his denunciations of the worship at Bethel, the oldest and the most sacred place in the land. He had heard, too, of his ominous predictions of coming disaster upon church, state, king and people. This fanatic must be silenced. With this purpose in mind, he sent a hasty message to Jeroboam II., warning him of the danger: "Amos hath conspired against thee, the land is not able to bear all his words." He obviously feared a revolt, the oppressed might rise against their masters and demand better treatment; moreover, Amos' words against the throne were treason.

Picture the high priest, seated in state, looking down

upon the herdman prophet with cold contempt not unmixed with fear. As the two faced one another, Amaziah was the first to speak. In commanding tones he addressed Amos in these words: O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house." Calmly determined, Amos made his famous reply: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman and a dresser of sycomore-trees: and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel." He was no professional prophet nor a member of a prophetic guild, but a simple working man till God called him. But this command of God was greater than that of the high priest and could not be disobeyed. Therefore Amos flung out a last terrible sentence upon Amaziah and his family. He said they would all be taken captive or die when the city was invaded, and "Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land" (vii. 10-17).

PEN AND PARCHMENT.

Thus Amos was driven from Israel back to the wilderness of Judæa. He was silenced in his own generation. Yet if he had been allowed liberty of speech, he might only have been heard by the people of his time; but when banished, his followers committed his sermons to writing: thus, "being dead he yet speaketh."

CHAPTER XV

THE PREPARATION OF HOSEA

(Hosea i.-iii.).

WHILE Amos was proclaiming God as the LORD of righteousness, another prophet was being prepared to take up his message and give to it yet fuller meaning. Amos was burningly interested in Israel and supremely conscious of God's message; yet he came up as a stranger from the southern kingdom, whereas Hosea was an "Israelite indeed," who loved his country with all his might. While Amos revealed Yahweh as a just God, it was left for Hosea to show that absolute justice can only be perfected in righteous love.

HOSEA THE MAN.

Hosea was a keen lover of beauty, an artist by nature, with an artist's sensitive touch and joy in loveliness. He pictures scene after scene with delicate charm, so that we too can see the plain of Esdraelon, with the ploughman at work breaking up the fallow ground, the sower scattering his seed, or the young heifers treading out the wheat from the chaff on the threshing floors. The vineyards sparkle again in the sunlight and the grey-green olives add charm to the hillsides, as we feast our eyes on the rich harvest of "corn, wine, and oil." Surely God has not forgotten to be gracious to the people of His choice? Even the soft morning cloud, speeding across the sky, has a fascination for Hosea; so too have the spring lilies in their pure white robes, and the spreading cedar, wafting its sweet scent on the morning breeze.

The loveliness of sight and sound awakened in Hosea a deep thankfulness and steadfast loyalty to God the Giver. Without stint the LORD had replenished Israel's

store, and the smile of His gracious favour rested upon her land. Thus love of God and love of country were blended in a beautiful unity, and patriotism became a sacred fire of devotion. In almost every line we feel Hosea's pride in his land; her fertility was the theme of his song. "Israel was like a luxuriant vine," or "first ripe figs."

Hosea's Vision.

Wherefore was Israel thus privileged? Amos was speaking of the responsibility of this privilege as the chosen nation, but most people in Israel ignored the question and took their position for granted. Hosea sought for an answer. We do not know when it came. Was it given him at his mother's knee? through heavenly vision? or by the "still small voice?" It matters little how it came, since come it did. The wonderful secret entered his soul and through him burst for the first time upon the world.

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My Son out of Egypt" (xi. 1). Herein lay the secret of Israel's prosperity. Yahweh of Israel loved the few poor slaves in Egypt as they toiled over their brick-making. Not as a distant Lord, but like a loving Father, He had heard their cries, felt the wound of their stripes, and called them forth. Slaves they were, but their Father purposed they should be trained for freedom, so that they might become true sons.

Hosea knew the story of the wilderness wanderings and saw in it the patience of the Divine Father with His ignorant and erring child. In a few words he pictures these years in parable form. The Father called His son and sought to teach him to walk alone; when he slipped the Father tenderly raised him in His arms and healed his hurts; but the child was unaware of the protecting presence. As the child grew older, the Father expected him to attain to manhood and develop a man's sense of duty and responsibility. Here the picture changes but the thought grows. We see a driver leading a team of oxen. They are required to work, but their harness is

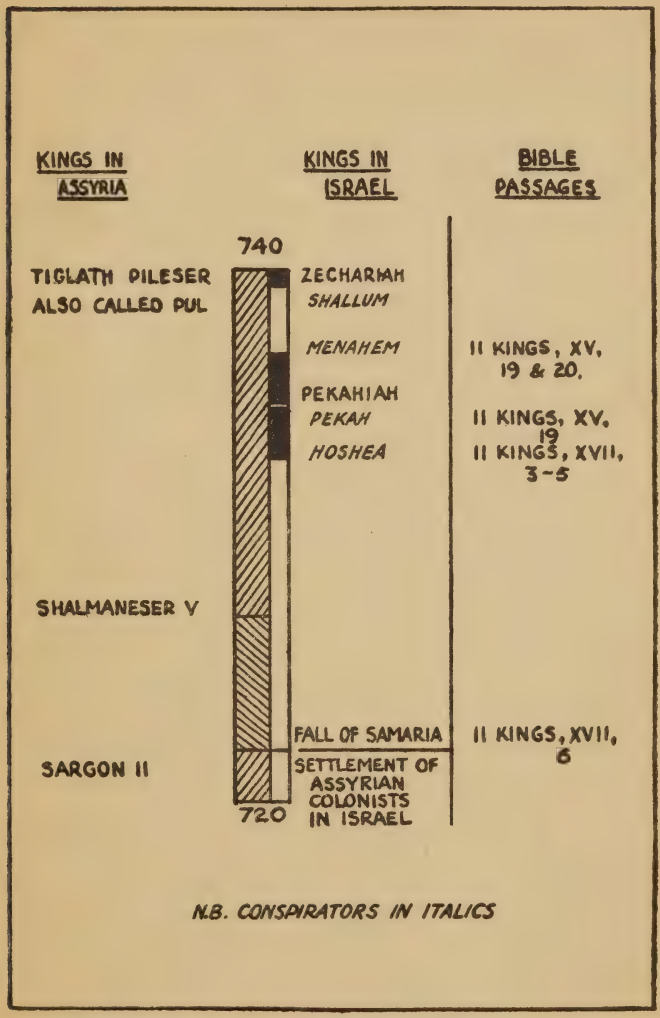
made to help them in their labour, "like unto bands of love" (xi. 4). The driver walks alongside the team, laying upon the oxen no harder tasks than they are able to perform. When they are weary, he eases their yoke with his own hands and sets food before them. Thus Hosea depicts the strength and tenderness of the Divine Father's guidance and protection throughout Israel's wanderings, reminding us of the guiding fire and the sheltering cloud that led the people onward to the promised land.

These days of Israel's childhood were already long past; when Hosea wrote in Jeroboam's reign, times were greatly changed. The ignorant slaves had become a prosperous nation; but as Hosea looked back at the course of their history, he realized that this was the "LORD'S doing" and it was "marvellous" in his eyes.

HOSEA THE LOVER.

In these prosperous days of Jeroboam II., depicted so accurately by Amos, there was a light-hearted gaiety in Israel. As we read we feel the throb of the busy city life, the songs of the vintage, and the gaiety of the festivals. Hosea grew up in these surroundings, an ardent, joyous youth, a polished gentleman of his time, sympathetically interested in the life around him. A lover of his fellow-men, Hosea was a keen politician, and conscious of the need of wise statesmanship. Possibly it was a sermon from Amos that first roused Hosea to serious thinking. Certainly he became filled with a deep desire to understand the God of his fathers, and to save his country from threatened disaster. This possessed his soul. He observed the unfaithfulness of Israel towards God and the thought of the glaring contrast between God's graciousness and Israel's ingratitude burnt into him.

His sympathetic nature sought friendship and in due course he took Gomer, the woman of his choice, to wife. In this as in all his life, he felt the guiding hand of God. Picture his marriage and dreams of home and children. Thus the home was founded. Where, we know



THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR HOSEA IV. TO XIII.

not; was it in the city? among the vineyards? in the smiling vale of Esdraelon?

There follows a tale too sad to tell. Three little ones came but their mother did not want them. Their very names have a ring of sorrow suggestive of the blight on their earlier years. Surrounded with love and beauty, this foolish woman had not eyes to see, nor heart to understand, what true love is. She cast herself out from her home, deserted her husband and babes, drawn aside by empty flattery and the vain promises of false friends.

HOSEA THE SUFFERER.

Imagine the broken family and the sad days for them all. Hosea grieved most for her. His loving thoughts followed her day by day and night by night. He knew full well that she would find her mistake and be left deserted and helpless.

By reason of the depth of his own sorrow, he thought over the fortunes of his country and observed in Israel the same restless readiness to forsake the steady path of loyalty. Like a "silly dove," Israel hovered between the great powers of Assyria and Egypt, seeking help from first one and then the other; but forgetful of the Father who loved her and in whose protection alone safety could be found. As he sought God's guidance in his own terrible grief, he came to realize that God was bidding him "Go" and search out the lost one. A reverent veil is drawn over the days, perhaps weeks or months, of patient, agonized searching, until the awful climax when he recognized his own wife set up for sale in a market-place. Utterly abandoned by those false friends, miserable, helpless, destitute, she stood awaiting purchase as a common slave. "So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver and an homer of barley and an half-homer of barley." Hosea restored her to her place in his home, a wonderful example of the power of faithful love to overcome all obstacles and win through at last.

GOD THE SUFFERER.

As Hosea looked back on his life's experience, he traced in it the call to his own life's work and found the message God purposed he should deliver. This was to declare the unquenchable love of God.

He found a meaning in his suffering; might it not prove a help to the closer understanding of the Father God? Did not his wounded love suggest the pain of God over Israel?

Israel could no longer be likened to a tiny child, unable to walk; she was now a full grown nation responsible for her actions. Wilfully she had turned from the path of duty, failed to value the love bestowed upon her, and deserted her Divine LORD. With increasing intensity Hosea realized that Israel too must suffer the consequence of her own act. She would lose home and country and "abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice. . . ."

But his own love was strong enough to show him that this could not be the end. The estrangement would not last for ever. Israel would learn through loss what she had failed to realize in prosperity. In the midst of desolation she would feel the love of God her one hope of salvation, and cry: "I will go return to my first husband: for then was it better with me than now."

"Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and shall come with fear unto the LORD and to His goodness in the latter days."

CHAPTER XVI

THE ETERNAL MESSAGE OF HOSEA

JEROBOAM II., Israel's strongest king, was dead and Tiglath Pileser, an ambitious emperor, was reigning in Assyria, when Hosea began the struggle to gain a hearing for his message. The air was full of rumours; jealousies and rival parties rent the kingdom into hostile camps. Four out of the last six kings seized the throne by bloody revolution, supported only by their own confederates. These daring adventurers won their position through intrigue and force, holding it as long as they were able by the same means. Their motives were self-aggrandisement or vainglory, and as was natural their actions inspired no public confidence. All noble ideals of the kingdom held in trust for Yahweh, by monarchs of His appointing, were utterly and for ever shattered. Hosea voices this tragedy in the words: "They (Israel) have set up kings, but not by Me" (viii. 4).

Such rulers thought of their present safety rather than the national future, and each tried to manœuvre, by fair means or by foul, to hold the kingdom for his own lifetime.

One of them, Menahem, sought to stave off immediate disaster by bribing Tiglath Pileser to retire from the country. In 2 Kings this same Tiglath Pileser is known by his private name of Pul. The same incident is recorded on an Assyrian inscription, where "Menahem of Samaria" is mentioned among the empire's tributary kings.

Pekah trusted to alliance with Syria to ward off the Assyrian conqueror, but he was not able to prevent him from ravaging the Israelitish provinces on the east of Jordan and carrying off some captives. The siege and destruction of Damascus increased Israel's peril, because it meant that she lay open to invasion with absolutely no protection or possible ally. When imminent peril

threatened from the armies of Shalmaneser, Hoshea the king thought to delay the siege of Samaria by a public submission to the Assyrian king and secret overtures to the Egyptian Pharaoh. But the Assyrians were not duped, and Hoshea's cowardice only hastened Israel's destruction.

The misery of these last years can be felt in these terrible words: "There is nought by swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood" (iv. 2). Growing terror and restlessness often express themselves in fits of wild excitement, when vain attempts are made to drown fear by noisy revelry—in ancient Israel accompanied by bouts of wine drinking.

At a time like this Israel greatly needed strong wise leaders able to steer the ship of the state and hold the nation true to the highest ideals. The kings failed. Where were the priests? They, too, were not equal to the occasion. With grieved disgust Hosea related a public scandal about some of them, while none seem to have raised a protest against the idolatrous fetish of the calf worship, tolerated even in the capital city. It is not surprising that a low standard of morality prevailed, provoking the sternest prophetic rebuke, "there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (iv. 1).

Quite plainly the masses had rejected the revelation given through Amos, and now disregarded Hosea. Despite the zeal of the prophets' teaching, the people clung to the primitive idea of Yahweh as a national deity—one who was willing and prepared to be bribed by sacrifices and ritual observances to protect Israel and preserve her from all her foes. The revealed truth that Yahweh desired "mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" was disregarded. Such inconvenient teaching was never honestly faced, but was put aside as involving too much struggle and effort (vi. 6).

The Cry of God.

As Hosea observed with anxious eyes the chaos around him, he was ever conscious of the presence of the Father God watching over Israel and pleading with her to accept His guardianship. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" (xi. 8). (Cities destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.) Compare these words with the cry of Christ over Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens together under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. xxiii. 37). In both love pleads and suffers but will not, or rather by reason of its very nature cannot, compel response. Love is calling for love, God is waiting for man, but love is true and is not deceived. With sorrow Hosea perceived that the signs of repentance in Israel were feigned, and he could only liken them to a "morning cloud," which fades away before the rising sun. He foresaw that the inevitable consequence of Israel's conduct could not long be delayed—"Samaria must bear her guilt"—and her people be carried away into captivity.

The Triumph of Love.

When this conviction became a certainty it overcame Hosea, even as a darkness that might be felt, so great was its intensity; nevertheless, the hope of the ultimate return of Israel grew ever clearer, shining as a beacon star in the night. "They (Israel) shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria" (xi. 11).

In the closing chapter this hope takes the form of a picture, suggestive of the Father in the Parable of the Prodigal going forth to welcome his son; even at this distance of time we can enter into the joy of their reunion as we listen to the glad cry: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (xiv. 4). "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke xv. 24).

How are we to understand the unquenchable hope of

Hosea in the light of after events? From 2 Kings and the Assyrian inscriptions we can reconstruct the history. Shalmaneser began the siege of Samaria, which lasted for three awful years. During this time the throne of Assyria was seized by Sargon, a usurper, who completed the siege and took some of the people captives. After the manner of the Assyrian conquerors he left the bulk of the population in Israel, but deported some thousands of the most important people and replaced them by Assyrian colonists. These when resident in the country met with misfortunes, notably the raid of a man-eating lion (or lions) from the Jordan Valley, and concluded that the God of Israel was punishing them because they were ignorant of the national religion. They therefore sent to Assyria to implore the return of an Israelitish priest to give them sufficient instruction to secure their safety. The request was granted and the high place of Bethel continued as before to be a centre of worship.

The writer of Kings vividly describes the mingling of the religious ideas of these foreign colonists with those of the native population. The Israelites naturally intermarried with the new colonists and gradually formed the race afterwards known as Samaritans. Thus the Israelites lost their position as a unique people entrusted with a special revelation, for the simple reason that they had not valued it sufficiently, and had in consequence sunk to the level of the other peoples.

We have no record of those who went into Assyrian captivity; but if the many in Israel could not preserve the purity of their race or religion, it is not to be expected that a few would do so when surrounded by a large heathen population in a strange land, especially when we remember the condition of the so-called national leaders at the time. It is possible there were a very few who lived up to the highest traditions of their race and religion, thereby preserving their identity for some generations. This is suggested by the recorded fact that amongst the Jewish exiles returning from Babylon in 538 B.C., there were 725 persons whose ancestors

belonged to the Israelitish towns of Lod, Hadid, and Ono. Lod is believed to be the site of the New Testament Lydda, and Hadid and Ono were within a few miles. If the details of the list in Ezra ii. are correct, it would appear that these colonists went south into Babylonia after the fall of the Assyrian empire. The call to return only brought these few faithful Israelites, because the majority were no longer a separate people any more than their brethren in the home country.

From these facts it is clear that history did not unfold as Hosea expected. Certainly Israel never responded to the Divine call as he hoped. But the prophet is not called to reveal history beforehand; he was not even certain whether Assyria or Egypt would be Israel's conqueror. The eternal truth and value, for our day, of Hosea's message lies in his conception of the unconquerable Love of God, calling, suffering and finally triumphant. His thoughts were confined to his own people and his horizon was limited to this earth life. He therefore conceived of Israel's return as a necessary witness to the irresistible power of love.

We see the Love of God Incarnate in Christ Jesus. "Herein was the Love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John iv. 9). This Christmas message was too great to be entrusted to any one people; in the words of the herald angel: "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people" (Luke ii. 10). Neither could it be limited to our earth life. Thus in Jesus we see Love, serving, suffering, and rising through death to possibility, beauty, and achievement beyond our ken.

INDEX

Aaron, 25, 26
Abana, 67
Absalom, 59
Adadnirari, 105
Agag, 50
Ahab, 68-73, 76, 79, 80, 84-86, 91-94, 99, 100
Ahaziah, 73
Ahijah, xi, 60
Amalek, 50
Amalekites, 50
Amaziah, 123, 132, 133
Ammon, 41, 42, 58, 121
Ammonites, 48, 122
Amorites, 41, 42
Amos, xii, 21, 103, 111-133, 134, 135, 141
Antiochus Epiphanes, 89
Arabah, 129
Arabia, 56, 59
Aramæans, 116
Assyria, 67, 91, 103, 106, 129, 138, 140, 142, 143
Assyrians, 105, 141
Athaliah, 73

Baal-berith, 38
Babylon, 143
Bathsheba, 53-54
Beersheba, 82
Benaiah, 55
Benhadad II., 68, 69, 98, 99
Benhadad III., 103
Benjamin, 62, 64
Bethel, 64, 66, 86, 114, 123, 128, 132, 133, 143
Bethlehem, 52

Caphtor, 124
Carmel, 56, 79-82, 92, 107, 108
Chemosh, 41, 58, 60, 64, 71, 72, 73, 120
Cherith, 77

Damascus, 17, 19, 63, 64, 67, 68, 70, 86, 95, 96, 98, 99, 102, 105, 114, 116, 121, 129
Dan, 64
David, xi, 30, 33, 49, 52-54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 62, 139
Deborah, xi, 28-34, 35
Dothan, 96, 109

Edom, 57, 70, 122
Edomites, 116, 122
Egypt, x, 17, 19, 22, 25, 43, 44, 56, 58, 60, 61, 63, 66, 75, 103, 135, 138, 142, 144
Egyptians, vii, viii, 17, 24, 44, 105
Elath, 57
Elijah, 21, 75-90, 92, 95, 102, 120, 124
Elisha, 68, 70, 71, 83, 84, 86-90, 95-110, 120
Ephraim, ix, 33, 36, 60, 142
Esdraelon, 29, 30, 35, 63, 103, 116, 134, 138
Ethbaal, 72, 79
Ethiopians, 124
Eziongeber, 56, 57

Gath, 103
Gaza, 122
Gezer, 29
Gideon, 35-40, 41, 42, 47, 105
Gihon, 55
Gilead, 29, 41, 64, 68, 75, 121

Gilgal, 29, 50, 51, 86, 108, 114, 123, 127
Gomer, 136

Hadid, 144
Hamath, 114, 129
Hazael, 95, 98, 99, 102, 103, 121
Heber, 33
Hiram, 57
Hittites, 105
Horeb, 15, 82
Hosea, xii, 37, 51, 102, 134-144
Hoshea, 141

Iddo, xi

Jabesh Gilead, 48, 49
Jacob, 66
Jael, 32, 33
Jasher, xi
Jebus, 29
Jebusites, 30
Jehoshaphat, 91, 92
Jehu, 99, 100, 102
Jephthah, 41-44
Jericho, 29, 86, 88, 107
Jeroboam I., 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 130
Jeroboam II., 106, 114, 123, 132, 136, 140
Jerusalem, 52, 55, 57-61, 64, 73, 89, 103, 142
Jethro, 16
Jezebel, 72, 73, 79, 80, 82, 84, 85, 100
Jezreel, 63, 76, 99
Joash, 106
Jonathan, 49
Joppa, 56, 57
Joram, 96, 100
Joshua, vii, ix, x, xi, 28, 29
Josiah, x
Judges, x, 43

Karkar, 91
Kir, 124
Kish, 47
Kishon, 32, 78

Lod, 144

Manasseh, 60
Menahem, 140
Mesha, 70, 71
Micaiah, 90-94, 100
Midianites, 35, 39, 105
Milcom, 58, 60
Miriam, 26, 47
Moab, 41, 57, 58, 60, 64, 70, 72, 120, 122
Moabites, 42, 64, 71, 72, 73, 116, 117
Moses, vii, viii, ix, 15-27, 28, 75, 82, 83, 90

Naaman, 68, 96, 109
Naboth, 84, 85, 99, 100
Nathan, xi, 52-54, 55
Nazarites, 118, 123
Negeb, 29
Nineveh, 103

Obadiah, 73, 80
Omri, 66-72
Ono, 144

Pekah, 140
Philistia, 122
Philistines, 33, 35, 56, 59, 122
Phœnicia, 63, 77, 79, 102, 120, 122
Phœnicians, 56, 57, 64, 72, 116, 122

Ramoth Gilead, 68, 91-95, 99, 100
Rehoboam, 61
Rimmon, 64, 70, 120

Samaria, 67, 68, 70, 72, 73, 76, 79, 91, 97, 103, 104, 105, 114, 118, 123, 127, 140, 142, 143
Samaritans, 143
Samson, 47
Samuel, x, xi, 45-51
Sargon, 143
Saul, xi, 45-51, 59, 62
Shalmaneser, 102, 141, 143

Sheba, 59
Shechem, 61, 64, 67
Shemaiah, xi, 61
Shunem, 89, 108
Sidon, 56, 72, 102
Sihon, 41
Sinai, 15, 16, 20, 22, 26, 28, 30, 75
Sisera, 30, 32
Sodom and Gomorrah, 128, 142
Solomon, x, xi, xii, 54, 55-62
Syria, 57, 67-70, 84, 91, 95-110, 114, 120, 140
Syrians, 44, 64, 92, 122

Tekoa, 111
Tiglath Pileser, 140
Tigris-Euphrates, 63, 67
Tyre, 56, 72, 73, 102, 116, 122

Uriah, 53

Zadok, 55
Zarephath, 77, 88
Zeboim, 142
Zion, 63

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
BILLING AND SONS, LTD., GUILDFORD AND ESHER

Date Due			
MY 24 '51			
FACULTY			
JY 6 - '55			
[illegible] 62			
DEC 21 '68			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
MAY 7 '73			
MAY 21 1976			

BS1505 .8.W456
Pioneer prophets, Moses to Hosea,
Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 00012 4687